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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 30

Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, including measures and recommendations agreed upon at its mid-term review

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/350 and Add.1)

Mr. Kobayashi (Japan): My Government welcomes the report on the mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), and would like to thank the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries (OSCAL) for preparing this excellent report, as well as the one on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, which we discussed last week in the same context.

In sub-Saharan Africa, per capita income today is lower than it was in 1970 in real terms. Of the 44 least developed countries, 33 are in Africa. Almost half of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons are in Africa. Indeed, Africa is the only region where conflicts are increasing. There were more than 34 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the world as of the end of 1999, of which 24 million were in sub-Saharan Africa. This is a reality that we must face.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Many important points are covered in the report. On this occasion, I would like to focus on the issues of good governance, trade and foreign direct investment, information and communication technology, regional integration and HIV/AIDS.

My Government would like to stress how important it is for African countries to summon the political will to promote good governance by ensuring human rights and the rule of law, and by strengthening transparent and accountable public administration and the capacity to maintain it.

The re-emergence of armed conflicts in some regions of Africa and the negative impact of these conflicts on national and international efforts to promote economic and social development are alarming. Rapid population growth, unequal access to resources and opportunities and unequal participation in national decision-making are among the root causes of armed conflict. Good governance in African societies is central to addressing priority issues adequately.

African countries have not sufficiently shared in the opportunities for international trade and foreign direct investment offered by the world economy. African exports of goods have grown by an average of 2 per cent per year, compared to a world average of 7 per cent. The share of African exports decreased from 5.9 per cent of world exports in 1980 to 3 per cent in 1990 and 2.3 per cent in 1996.

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My Government believes that in the increasingly globalized world, trade and foreign direct investment present enormous opportunities for Africa. Aid is no substitute for trade. The multilateral trading system must therefore be responsive to the development aspirations of Africa. The international community should support the efforts of African countries to identify and upgrade African products with export potential.

Japan would like African countries to pay closer attention to the new opportunities that could be opened up by creating better conditions for foreign direct investment. Foreign direct investment could enable African countries, among other things, to tap into the large pool of expatriate expertise, which will help to fill the human-resource gaps in Africa.

My delegation believes that information and communication technology offer African countries an unprecedented chance to hasten their development. On the other hand, those countries in which most people live without access to information technology cannot fully participate in the new global society. Accordingly, the digital divide must be addressed before it is too late. Bilateral aid donors, as well as international organizations, should be encouraged to devise ways and means of giving the people of Africa greater access to information and communication technology.

Prior to the Okinawa G-8 Summit, Japan declared that it would prepare a comprehensive cooperation package for bridging the digital divide with a view to providing a total of $15 billion over the next five years. In implementing this package, Japan will collaborate with the United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the International Telecommunications Union and other relevant international organizations.

African countries and their development partners should recognize the importance of regional cooperation for liberalizing trade; developing physical infrastructure and institutions, including regional capital markets and research institutions; tackling HIV/AIDS; and preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. More specifically, in an increasingly integrated world, subregional and regional integration provide higher visibility to global investors, promote cross-border trade and investment, and reduce production and marketing costs.

Due to their proximity to the field, regional and subregional organizations may have a comparative advantage over global organizations in terms of their better understanding of the issues and their context, as well as in their greater ability to fine-tune measures and mechanisms. Thus, they are preferred channels for the design and implementation of measures for conflict prevention, management and resolution. This is the reason why external support is so important for building and strengthening the capacity of regional and subregional institutions and for further implementing the programmes of African subregional economic groups.

HIV/AIDS is not merely a health issue; it also impedes the development of developing countries. Governments and the United Nations system should actively promote the incorporation of a broad-based approach to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in all policies and programmes relating to development. Fighting HIV/AIDS should be a central part of the development programmes of developing countries, particularly in the efforts for poverty reduction.

On the occasion of the G-8 Okinawa Summit, the Government of Japan launched the Okinawa Infectious Diseases Initiative, under which Japan will target a total of $3 billion to be allocated over the next five years to enhance assistance for measures to combat HIV/AIDS and other infectious and parasitic diseases. As a follow-up to the G-8 Okinawa Summit, the Government of Japan is now preparing a conference for December in Okinawa, the aim of which is to actualize the commitment made by G-8 leaders in order to establish a new partnership to fight the major infectious diseases — namely, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. It is sincerely hoped that that conference will contribute to our efforts against HIV/AIDS. Also, Japan, along with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, co-hosted in Tokyo earlier this month the second seminar on the development of health and medical services for Africa, as a part of the follow-up of the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development. At the seminar, participants from African, Asian and Latin American countries discussed ways to enhance South-South cooperation against HIV/AIDS in Africa. They adopted the summary of the seminar, which is expected to make a contribution to the international conference in Okinawa. Also, Japan is currently preparing for a ministerial meeting on African development to be held

in the fiscal year 2001, as announced by Foreign Minister Yohei Kono in his speech to the General Assembly this September.

While certain progress has been made in implementing UN-NADAF, much remains to be done. In the final review, what has been achieved so far and what has not should be carefully analysed. Japan has been trying to realize the goals and objectives of UN-NADAF through the process of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). TICAD has much in common with UN-NADAF in that both stress poverty eradication through accelerated economic growth, the economic integration of Africa into the world economy, economic diversification and human resources development.

Finally, Japan remains committed to working together with African countries, as well as with the United Nations, in efforts to build a prosperous continent free from want and fear, by realizing the objectives of UN-NADAF.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Brazil welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). First of all, I wish to highlight the need to establish follow-up mechanisms and frameworks to ensure the consistency of ongoing initiatives for the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Brazil shares the view that effective responses to Africa's problems can be achieved only through coordinated efforts of the international community and the mobilization of political will, both in Africa and beyond its borders. As we know, in response to the development challenges faced by the African continent, in December 1991 the General Assembly adopted the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s as a framework of consensus and partnership between Africa and the international community. We regret, however, that progress has been limited in the implementation of the New Agenda. Foreign direct investment in Africa remains minimal and concentrated in a few areas, while official development assistance continues to decline. Economic insecurity and inadequate financial support continue to aggravate the situation of the majority of African countries. Structural adjustment, which has led to the recovery of some macroeconomic indicators, has not been sufficient to set African countries on the road to sustainable development. As the Secretary-General correctly pointed out in his report, while there has been some progress in resolving the debt crisis, this has been less visible in low-income countries where external debt service claims nearly one fifth of average savings.

New problems have affected the continent, such as that of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In sum, the mobilization of resources to promote peace, stability and sustainable development in Africa requires a much higher degree of international financial cooperation and greater commitment by the international community.

The international community plays a crucial role in addressing the challenges faced by African countries in their development process, as well as in translating commitments into concrete actions. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, for instance, should be strengthened and broadened so as to benefit more countries. Brazil is making very important efforts to contribute to the HIPC process. So far, our costs related to bilateral debt relief to the countries that have already qualified for assistance have amounted to more than $300 million. Brazil also participates in the funding of the International Monetary Fund's additional HIPC costs.

We urge Member States to respond creatively to the positive developments in Africa and to react to the less positive ones through a constructive and attentive dialogue. The objective of such a dialogue should not be to impose conclusions unilaterally arrived at, but to assist Africans, when such assistance is required, to come up with appropriate solutions and make them work. Technical assistance, for instance, cannot be supply-oriented, but must be targeted at the specific needs of the recipient countries and should make full use of their resources and potentialities. On the other hand, in order to make a difference for Africa in areas such as trade, finance, technical cooperation and capacity-building, the United Nations must continue to implement specific assistance initiatives and forge a closer relationship at all levels with relevant regional organizations and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The achievement of priority development objectives, however, goes far beyond institutional arrangements in the United Nations system and depends ultimately on the political will of Member States to strengthen their cooperation with Africa.

I wish to stress the importance of South-South cooperation to the development of Africa. The

strengthening of technical cooperation among developing countries can contribute significantly to the mobilization of resources and to the promotion of sustainable development in Africa. Despite its limited resources, Brazil has a long-standing record of cooperation with Africa and has been deploying efforts, through the Brazilian Cooperation Agency and other national institutions, to share with Africa its own experience in struggling for development.

A large portion of Brazilian technical cooperation projects with developing countries are channeled to African countries in a number of strategic areas, such as capacity-building and training of experts, health, basic education programmes, management of agricultural policies, tropical agriculture, electric power generation and monitoring and exploration of mineral resources.

In the field of the fight against HIV/AIDS, for example, since 1997 Brazil has carried out cooperation programmes with Portuguese-speaking countries in the areas of the management of preventive programmes and the establishment of epidemiological monitoring systems. This cooperation, which is based on our own national experience, is now being extended to other countries in Africa. Last year, experts of the Brazilian Ministry of Health visited Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and Botswana in order to identify cooperation projects.

The dialogue between subregional integration processes is another example of cooperation. Enhancing external trade with other partners, including developing countries, has been one of the main objectives of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). We attach great importance to furthering a dialogue between MERCOSUR and the integration processes in Africa. We have already taken initial steps in this direction with the Southern African Development Community.

Another modality of cooperation to be explored might encompass trilateral schemes involving an African country, Brazil and a third country or international organization. For example, initiatives in the field of agriculture and health might be taken with the cooperation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization or the United Nations Children's Fund. At the international level, Brazil and African countries have been working together in such organizations as the International Coffee Organization, the International Cocoa Organization and the Common Fund for Commodities.

As far as conflict resolution is concerned, Brazil continues to provide political and material support to Africa, as illustrated by its participation in the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Angola and Mozambique and its contribution to the negotiation of a ceasefire in Guinea-Bissau.

Regarding the need for a coordinated approach to humanitarian assistance, we believe that appropriate mechanisms for efficient coordination within the United Nations system should be developed, taking into account that several United Nations organs are responsible for addressing humanitarian problems.

A peaceful, stable and prosperous Africa is a crucial element of world stability. It is true that, in recent years, some unfortunate events have led us to fear that Africa was bound to fail as a continent of peace and prosperity, a sentiment that has been called "Afro-pessimism". Nevertheless, Africa need not be defined as a continent immersed in conflict. As is widely recognized, there are many parts of Africa where peace and economic growth are taking root. Through the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, all Member States acknowledged the special needs of Africa and pledged to assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development. The effective implementation of such commitments calls for a strategic partnership between Africa and the international community.

Brazil remains determined to work for the economic development of African countries and hopes that the international community will strengthen its assistance to the region and thereby contribute to the full realization of the fundamental rights of Africans.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): It is good to see you in the chair today, Sir. It makes me want to practice my French, but I will not.

We meet today to evaluate the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). Before us are two very useful reports by the Secretary-General, aimed at assisting us in this review. My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for a very thorough report and addendum providing a most useful

overview of the implementation of the recommendations of the mid-term review of this important Agenda. The reports also contain interesting proposals for further implementation, which need serious consideration.

The addendum on resource flows to Africa makes rather sad reading, as it highlights the deteriorating situation in Africa in the recent past. The decrease in domestic savings rates; the continuing flight of capital from the continent, which has reached a staggering estimated total of $350 billion; the drop of more than 50 per cent in official development assistance flows into the continent in the six-year period from 1992 to 1998; the persistently low and decreasing foreign direct investment flows into Africa; the deterioration in terms of trade for the continent; the escalating debt burden; and the decline of the per capita income from $749 in 1980 to $688 in 1998, a decline of about 9 per cent — all this paints a very bleak picture of the problems facing our continent.

All these signs seem to suggest that, once we come to the final review of the UN-NADAF in 2002, we will be faced with an even greater challenge than we had at the beginning of the Agenda. We risk the prospect of a tragic confirmation that Africa's economic and financial situation has worsened in the decade that UN-NADAF has been in place.

Despite these negative and depressing statistics, my delegation believes that we Africans are at a turning point and that the future of Africa looks much brighter. In this regard, I wish to echo the Secretary-General, who in his report on this item observes that

> "Africa has an important opportunity for a new beginning in the new millennium. Since independence, never have the momentum and conditions for change been better." (*A/55/350/Add.1, para. 48*)

I share this optimism for a number of reasons. We Africans have started assuming responsibility for finding solutions to our own problems. We are ready to address the challenges we face. There is a growing understanding of the particular nature of Africa's problems and challenges. The wide range of bilateral and multilateral initiatives bears testimony to the active interest in addressing the particular needs of our continent. Already, Africa is grappling with its own proposals towards the establishment of a global partnership for the development of the continent. These proposals, by Africans for Africans, will, hopefully, be launched in the not-too-distant future.

Africans are in the process of defining the broad priorities for our continent. We choose to call this process the African renaissance. First, we have concluded that the African renaissance means the establishment of democratic political systems which will ensure the accomplishment of the goal that the people must govern.

Second, the renaissance will make certain that these systems take into account African specifics so that, while being truly democratic and protecting human rights, they are nevertheless designed in ways which really ensure that political and peaceful means can be used to address the competing interests of different social groups in each country.

Third, the renaissance will establish institutions and procedures that will enable the continent to deal collectively with questions of democracy, peace and stability.

Fourth, it will help to achieve sustainable development that results in the continuous improvement of the standard of living and the quality of life of the masses of people.

Fifth, it will qualitatively change Africa's place in the global economy so that it is free of the yoke of the international debt burden and is no longer a mere supplier of raw materials and an importer of manufactured goods.

Sixth, it will ensure the full emancipation of the women of Africa.

Seventh, it will help in successfully confronting the scourge of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Lastly, the renaissance is about protecting the environment of our continent and ensuring the sustainable use of our natural resources.

Not surprisingly, these priorities are all included in the agenda of UN-NADAF.

The final review of UN-NADAF and the consideration of a possible successor arrangement would have to address a number of challenges. The first would be to make a thorough evaluation of all the initiatives so far. These would not only be within the United Nations system, but would include other

bilateral, multilateral and regional initiatives related to Africa. This will, of course, also include initiatives emanating from our continent.

Another challenge will be to consider how this review process can be linked to the work of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. The high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2001 must also feed into the review process.

Furthermore, consideration will have to be given to ways in which the Africa-specific elements of the major United Nations conferences can be brought together with the other initiatives for and by Africa. As our heads of State or Government said during the Millennium Summit held here in New York a few weeks ago, the problems of the new millennium require comprehensive solutions. And we from Africa know this truth better than many.

As hopeful as we are about the future of our continent, we also recognize that there can be no sustainable development without peace and security. The immediate reminder for us is the senseless war raging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This war consumes nine other countries, many of them our neighbours. We watch helplessly as we see very precious resources, both human and material, being wasted in this war.

The countries of southern Africa, under the leadership of President Chiluba of Zambia, came together more than a year ago to agree on a peace plan known as the Lusaka Agreement, which we believed would help bring this war to an end. Sixteen months later, we are still waiting for the Security Council to play its mandated role for restoring peace and security in the region.

This is one reason why for us in Africa the Brahimi report is fundamental and very important in laying the foundation for peace in Africa. If we lose the Brahimi report to the disagreements that we have, which my delegation believes can be overcome, the biggest losers will be those of us in Africa. Already we have lost much, and we cannot afford to lose even more.

One of the areas we will have to review when we next discuss UN-NADAF will be the contribution of regional solutions to the problems we face in Africa. We in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have seen the fruits of our regional integration and cooperation. SADC has over the years designed a number of spatial development projects that bring together the efforts of more than one country in our region. For example, South Africa and Mozambique have combined to provide the physical transport, communication and power infrastructure as the foundation for the development of services and manufacturing. This is what is known as the Maputo Corridor. The joint efforts by our two countries vastly improved the costing structure and competitiveness, thereby attracting significant foreign direct investment to the area.

Another example is the Lebombo corridor, which brings together three countries, Swaziland, Mozambique and South Africa, working together to develop environmentally friendly projects, including those for attracting eco-tourism. Several neighbouring countries, including Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique, joined to built a major road to transport goods to places between the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean. More projects are in the pipeline. Besides the normal economic advantages, these projects have deepened democracy and good-neighbourliness while making development in our region more sustainable.

We in Africa are going through a difficult but very promising period, as the Secretary-General so correctly pointed out in his report. We need to strengthen the partnership between the countries of the North and the countries of the South, especially those of us in Africa. The problems we face cannot be addressed by Africans only. The HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and other diseases require a global rather than a continental solution. While we may be ready to do as much as we can, we hope those countries that have more to give, especially our northern partners, will find it in their hearts and their budgets to assist.

At the next review of UN-NADAF we hope the Secretary-General will be able to report that there has been a change in the plight of Africa. With confidence, our leaders meeting at the Organization of African Unity summit in Algeria in 1999 declared this the African century. We believe they must have known something, and UN-NADAF may bear this out next time.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): The item on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s is of the utmost importance in the opinion of my delegation. This is why we would like to share our views in this debate.

The prime objective of the United Nations New Agenda was to accelerate the transformation, integration, diversification and economic growth of African countries, to make them less vulnerable to outside forces, to enhance their autonomy and vigour and to ensure a lasting development process.

From this standpoint, at the 1996 mid-term review of the implementation of the New Agenda, the General Assembly noted the progress that had been made by a number of African countries in the area of economic reforms, the adjustment process, democratization and the strengthening of civil society. However, despite all these efforts, Africa is still grappling with serious socio-economic problems, which are aggravated by a set of endogenous and exogenous factors such as globalization, investments, indebtedness and so forth.

In fact, globalization, while presenting clear advantages for the world economy and particularly for industrialized countries, causes new problems and involves constraints for the African countries, which find themselves further pushed to the sidelines.

Export receipts and the survival of the majority of African countries continue to depend on certain basic commodities, whose prices as a whole have declined ever since 1998, thereby causing a decline in internal savings and investment. Despite the efforts deployed by a large number of countries to improve conditions for private investment, foreign direct investment continues to contribute very little to our economies.

Moreover, in addition to the drastic decline in official development assistance, African countries' huge debt remains a source of great concern, since debt servicing consumes a large part of our income, to the detriment of national investment.

Other facts, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and armed conflicts, not only cause tremendous human suffering, but also impede Africa's socio-economic development, since the most vulnerable sectors of our population are mainly those in the productive sectors.

In the face of all these challenges, a number of initiatives have been launched, but unfortunately they have been weakened by the fact that many of the commitments made by the international community under the New Agenda have not been honoured.

We appeal to the international community to adopt and implement new measures, especially to help in the struggle against poverty and to stimulate growth.

Implementation of these new measures to ensure lasting development requires first a strategy having as its backbone macroeconomic stability, a secure environment to encourage investment, support for export activities, adequate investment in human development sectors such as health and education, and good governance, as well as improvement of basic infrastructure.

The key to development and the main objective of any development policy in Africa is the struggle against poverty. We know that poverty arises from the interaction between population, environment and development.

The tragedy of Africa is, first, that population growth is far greater than growth in food production per capita and, secondly, that the rapid deterioration of the environment seriously harms agricultural output. It is therefore important urgently to tackle these problems and to incorporate population, environmental and agricultural development issues in development planning and anti-poverty policies.

After the follow-up in Geneva in June to the World Summit for Social Development, the Millennium Summit condemned the various constraints on developing countries, particularly the African countries, since, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 80 per cent of countries with weak human resources development are in Africa and four out of ten Africans live in absolute poverty.

Although African countries, those most concerned, will have to adopt adequate and urgent measures to get out of this impasse, particularly by ensuring good governance, it is also essential that donors and lenders agree, without too many conditions, to help them mobilize the resources needed to finance their development. All eyes are therefore on the high-level international and intergovernmental meeting on financing for development, to be held in 2001.

We repeat that advancing the cause of Africa means advancing the cause of the entire world, since in our globalized, interdependent world it is only by helping the poorest to overcome their underdevelopment that the better off can guarantee their own survival.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) *(spoke in French)*: This third debate on Africa in the space of just 10 days is of particular importance, because it falls within the framework of the preliminary dialogue on preparation for the final review and evaluation of implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, which will take place in 2002. Although it would have been desirable to space out these debates a little, each has its own merit relating to different, but nevertheless complementary, aspects of the situation of the continent which are taken up each time.

At the beginning of the 1990s the New Agenda embodied the concern of the Organization and the international community as a whole to support Africa's development efforts. The New Agenda, which is a true plan of action, has become a political contract containing responsibilities and commitments agreed by the African States, on the one hand, and their development partners, on the other, concerning specific actions.

During the mid-term review in 1996 it emerged clearly that, despite some progress in some areas, on the whole the same conditions which had justified the launching of the New Agenda at the beginning of the decade remained in place. Moreover, it was widely recognized that for their part, despite the innumerable difficulties and the objective limits on their resources, the African States had made serious efforts to implement the agreed actions and had thereby honoured a good part of their responsibilities. That being so, and given the difficult prospects for the continent, particular measures and recommendations were proposed by common agreement in order to continue and accelerate the New Agenda's application. Thus, it is with great interest that Africa looks forward to the final review in 2002.

In this framework, the progress report submitted to us by the Secretary-General on implementation, including measures and recommendations agreed at the mid-term review in 1996, and the addendum are two documents full of information, analyses and proposals on actions taken and/or initiated both by the African States themselves and by the international community, in particular the United Nations system, and are therefore a source of an enormous amount of information about a fundamental dimension of African development — the mobilization of financial resources. My delegation appreciates the high quality of these two documents.

The General Assembly resolutions and the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council contain terms of reference which can guide the review process. Algeria believes that the independent review of the implementation of the New Agenda should have the aim of drawing up a balance sheet. It would be useful in this connection if the team responsible for the study included representatives of African countries and their development partners, both in the north and in the south. The United Nations system, including the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, as well as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), should also be represented on this team. Civil society could also make a useful contribution to the review.

Clearly, the independent review and the final examination of the implementation of UN-NADAF would remain incomplete if they were not part of an ongoing approach in the international community's support for African development. Therefore, the discussion and negotiations to take place between now and 2002 should aim at developing another framework or programme of cooperation to succeed UN-NADAF.

Similarly, it would be useful if they took into account the results of the debate that the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), held during the coordination segment of its substantive session in 1999, which was devoted to the implementation and coordinated follow-up of African development initiatives.

At this stage we think it would be useful to stress that consideration of the arrangements for a successor to UN-NADAF should be guided by the following elements.

The first is an effective commitment on the part of the international community in a spirit of real partnership with Africa and respect for African priorities as defined by Africans in their national and regional development strategies. The second element is strengthening Africans' sense of ownership of the

cooperation activity proposed to them. Another element is ongoing support for African capacities at the national, subregional and regional levels in coordinating programmes of cooperation and development assistance.

Other elements include adaptation of the cooperation with the continent so that it can take on the new priorities resulting from globalization; greater involvement of the Organization of African Unity and greater attention to the main areas of work established by that organization, especially in the areas of integration, education, health and others; the need for a serious effort to improve coordination and harmonization of the many international bilateral and multilateral initiatives for Africa; the need for adequate identification of the continent's need; and the need for specific benchmarks in the form of targeted goals or indicators and time limits for implementation. The Algerian delegation believes these principles should be considered in evaluating a successor to UN-NADAF.

Many international events of considerable importance for Africa are expected before the final review of UN-NADAF in 2002. The international conference on financing for development, the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS should all bear in mind the specific dimensions of the African situation in order to firmly consolidate a consensus on a special effort for the continent.

Furthermore, the high-level ECOSOC segment next year, which is to be devoted to the United Nations role in support of efforts for the sustainable development of Africa, will no doubt enrich the debate and take place within the context of developing a new framework of cooperation for the Organization to replace UN-NADAF. Furthermore, Algeria can only welcome the fact that African development continues to represent a priority for our Organization.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders unanimously recognized Africa's special needs. Algeria dares hope, in this context, that the commitments made, especially in terms of special measures to be taken to meet challenges such as eliminating poverty and achieving sustainable development in Africa, will soon take concrete form.

In this connection, the final review of UN-NADAF in 2002 offers an opportunity of choice for the rest of the world to reflect on a real world programme of support for Africa along the lines of the Marshall Plan for a Europe that had emerged bled white at the end of the Second World War. Would it not be as fair for Africa also to have its chance?

Therefore, Algeria calls for international mobilization for a world programme on African development, in which the United Nations would play a central role. Such a programme could be called a "programme" or a "world partnership for African development" that would serve as the global framework for all existing initiatives.

In recent years, many bilateral and multilateral initiatives have been taken by Africa's development partners in the North and the South. Africa can only welcome this, while hoping that these initiatives will be further strengthened and will promote a spirit of world solidarity and effective support for our continent's efforts.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and East European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the other associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, align themselves with this statement.

As the main donor of funds and principal trading partner of the African continent, the European Union attaches special importance to the success of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). The African continent, in particular sub-Saharan Africa which includes 33 of the 48 countries officially designated as least developed countries, is the priority region for European Union cooperation. The European Union endeavours in all international meetings to fully consider the particular needs of Africa. It does this at the United Nations, especially during General Assembly special sessions, as well as in international financial institutions.

This is one of the key policy objectives of the European Union, which was clearly stated at the Africa-Europe summit held in Cairo this year. The European Union welcomes the success of that conference and the adoption of a declaration and a plan of action which set guidelines for its relations with Africa. The hosting by the European Union in Brussels of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least

Developed Countries next year is another example of Europe's commitment to development, particularly in Africa.

The report submitted by the Secretariat highlights the varying results achieved in the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa. On the one hand, it shows what we have achieved in terms of resumed economic growth, the ongoing re-establishment of the major macroeconomic balances, efforts to establish sound economic policies and structural reforms and real progress on the democratization front.

On the other hand, however, the report shows the enormous challenge that remains to be met, with 51 per cent of the sub-Saharan African population living in absolute poverty, insufficient agricultural and food production, lack of progress in diversifying economies, insufficient integration into the world economy and, finally, the persistently weak social indicators threatened by the rapid spread of AIDS. It is crucial that the African countries take the measures necessary to fight this scourge; have been positive results in this regard, as the examples of Senegal and Uganda have demonstrated.

The international community must support their efforts, including by mobilizing the additional resources that are required. The European Union welcomes the fact that the fight against AIDS has become a top priority for United Nations agencies. It will continue to support action in that area, in particular through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. It will also continue its efforts to strengthen health systems, including the fight against other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria.

The European Union continues strongly to favour the formulation of an integrated United Nations approach to African development which also takes account of the political, economic and social dimensions of conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The European Union would point out that 20 of the 38 poorest countries in the world are still embroiled in or are only just emerging from conflict. The coming of peace is not in itself enough to eradicate poverty. But there can be no real progress in the fight against poverty without sustainable peace.

In that connection, the European Union is greatly concerned at the proliferation or recurrence of conflict in West Africa, in the Great Lakes region and in southern Africa. Not only do such conflicts, inter alia through the concomitant illegal exploitation of natural wealth, deflect the financial resources of African countries and of the chief contributors from development to the peacekeeping operations budget, but they also threaten to do permanent damage to efforts at regional integration, and ultimately to destabilize entire subregions, undermining the development efforts of all the surrounding States. The European Union therefore supports United Nations endeavours in the sphere of conflict prevention and conflict resolution, whether in the form of support for regional peace and security efforts, mediation attempts or a better understanding of the economic and commercial aspects of particular African crises.

The report submitted by the Secretariat pinpoints the difficulties faced by the African continent in mobilizing financial resources and in using them effectively for its development. The report also highlights the extent of the African continent's needs. While recognizing the shortage of domestic resources which can be mobilized in the countries concerned, the European Union would again stress the importance of developing countries themselves creating an environment that is favourable to development by encouraging the rule of law, human rights and good governance, inter alia through the setting up of reliable and effective systems of taxation. It goes without saying that the resources mobilized in that way must be channelled into satisfying the basic social needs of the people, especially the most vulnerable groups, without ethnic, religious or gender discrimination. The creation of a favourable environment is moreover a means for African countries to assume responsibility for the measures decided upon to help them; that is an essential condition for the success of such measures.

The European Union acknowledges the vital role of funds and programmes and of the World Bank and the regional development banks in reducing poverty. It calls for concessional funds to be targeted at the poorest countries, which have only limited access to financial markets, and most of which are in Africa, so that the requisite basic infrastructures can be developed there. It considers that policies to combat poverty and inequality must be at the centre of economic reforms. They must be more than just safety nets to cushion the impact of adjustment policies.

Official development assistance (ODA) must complement the mobilization of national resources and must play an essential role of catalyst for the channelling of private funds and direct international funding to developing countries. It is vital that the flow of foreign direct investment to Africa be increased. The Secretariat report highlights the fact that in 1999 Africa attracted a mere 4.5 per cent of total foreign direct investment in developing countries.

On the debt issue, the European Union expressed its position during the debate on that item in the Second Committee. The Union confirmed in particular that it considers the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative to be a key element in fighting poverty and achieving the objective of the sustainable development of developing countries. It fully supports that Initiative. The European Union calls on eligible countries to take the requisite political and economic measures to join the process. It also urges creditor countries which have not yet done so to contribute to the funding of the enlarged HIPC Initiative so that the burden can be shared equitably. The European Union will see to it that the financial contribution to the Initiative is not to the detriment of other ODA channels.

To conclude on the issue of financing, the European Union confirms that it attaches great importance to the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, to be held in 2001. It must provide an opportunity to campaign for better mobilization of national and international resources for development, and to help achieve greater consistency in policies.

Access by African countries to the markets of the developed countries is an important aspect of their economic development. Here, the European Union regards Africa's integration into the world economy as particularly important. The Union has opened its market wide to products from African countries and intends to go even further in that direction. The Union was the driving force behind a World Trade Organization initiative to guarantee duty-free and quota-free access for exports from least developed countries. The European Union is prepared to work for further progress in eliminating customs duties and quotas, a major effort which we hope might be followed by other countries. The Union extends a general invitation to the other industrialized nations to follow its lead in opening up trade to manufactured products from African countries.

Regional integration too could be an effective factor for the economic development of Africa, considering that many African countries have, as the report notes, internal markets of limited scale. The European Union supports the promotion of regional integration, which could also be an instrument for coordinating and harmonizing a broad range of sectoral policies, and which is also an indispensable means of combating natural disasters. The European Union will continue actively to support the various regional integration initiatives and United Nations programmes helping to set up unified structures within the continent.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the fundamental importance for the European Union of a comprehensive and integrated approach to African development which would take account both of political and economic aspects and of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable human development. That is the approach of the recent Cotonou agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States and the European Union, which focuses on the objective of reducing poverty in a way consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy.

Such a global and integrated approach calls for coordination based on existing processes such as the Comprehensive Development Framework, the poverty reduction strategy paper and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

Mr. Malhotra (India): I compliment the Secretary-General on the comprehensive nature and the thought-provoking quality of the report (A/55/350 and A/55/350/Add.1) before us. We have read those documents with great interest and believe that the thorough examination and implementation of the recommendations contained therein would certainly contribute to the realization of the resolve of our heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit to meet the special needs of Africa.

During discussions on this agenda item at the fifty-third session, my delegation pointed out that the best of intentions and goodwill have to be matched by the provision of adequate resources that are not only sufficient for the implementation of the United Nations

New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) but that will lead to a growth rate in gross domestic product of at least 8 per cent per annum, which is judged to be the minimum required for an effective fight against poverty in the African continent. We then fully concurred with the views of the Secretary-General, expressed in his progress report (A/53/390), that one of the critical issues hindering the implementation of the New Agenda related to impediments encountered in increasing financial flows to the countries of Africa. We note from paragraph 165 of the present report (A/55/350) that effective mobilization of financial resources, despite often-expressed political resolve, remains a critical development challenge for the African region. Given the critical importance of this issue, the Secretary-General has presented to us an addendum concentrating exclusively on the mobilization of additional resources for African development.

The picture, as outlined in the addendum, is bleak: inflows have been largely offset by outflows; official development assistance (ODA) to Africa has been falling by about 20 per cent in real terms since the advent of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa; and, most importantly, the perceived integration of African countries into the globalized market place appears to be becoming a curse, with Africa's loss of market share in its exports over the period 1970-1997 representing a staggering annual income loss of $68 billion — almost 20 per cent of its gross domestic product.

The report correctly points out that, in comparison with those of the 1980s, recent trends indicate a worsening of aggregate resource flows to Africa. It furthermore makes the absolutely valid and crucial point that ODA and other external resource inflows are falling precisely when the need is greatest — when the African countries have undertaken valiant economic reforms and achieved considerable progress with regard to the promotion of the private sector, the intensification of democratization processes, the strengthening of civil society institutions and in other areas. It is clear that productivity per dollar of ODA in Africa has increased considerably through these efforts made by African countries, but it is saddening that the increase in efficiency in the utilization of external assistance should be matched not by enhanced commitments, but by reduced inflows.

Africa is perhaps the only region in the world where per capita income in 1998 was lower than it was 1980 — $688, as compared with $749; and it is the only region where poverty is projected to increase in the next decade. A sustainable reduction in poverty can be ensured only through the promotion of sustained and broad-based income growth. It has been estimated that to achieve the required growth rates, investment rates of at least 30 per cent to 40 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) per annum would be required for sub-Saharan African countries. Given the average savings rate of 13 per cent during the 1990s — or even the current domestic savings rate of about 18 per cent — they face a significant resource gap of at least 22 per cent to 27 per cent per annum. This gap must be filled by external financial resources.

We noted from the report that the average national savings rate of 15.8 per cent for the period 1996-1998 was small in comparison with Africa's historical peak performance of 28.4 per cent, in the 1980s. But, as the report itself points out, and as my delegation said two years ago, there can hardly be any savings at subsistence levels without squeezing consumption. Furthermore, even in the face of difficulties, the savings rate is depleted by capital flight, which remains pervasive and severe, and by the net transfer of resources abroad in the form of net factor income less public grants.

These structural impediments could have been overcome had the international community been responsive to the needs of Africa. But, as the Secretary-General states in document A/55/350/Add.1, in terms of quantity, reliability and effectiveness, external finance has been disappointing. The inflow of capital to African countries has steadily declined from $28.2 billion in 1995 to $20.8 billion in 1996 and to $17.1 billion in 1998 — a fall of over a third in three years. The fall in ODA from $19.7 billion in 1992 to $9.7 billion in 1998 — a reduction of more than one half in six years — is even more disturbing. The fall has been dramatic, especially when we consider the promises that were made and the expectations generated when we estimated that ODA should increase by 4 per cent per annum in real terms in the 1990s. Instead of an increase, there has been a 24 per cent decline in real terms — an average annual decline during the past 10 years of 2.4 per cent per annum.

The reason for this decline is implicit in paragraph 25 of the report in document

A/55/350/Add.1. As the Secretary-General states in that paragraph, "In reality, development is but one of the multiple objectives served by aid."

The end of the cold war did not produce a peace dividend simply because many African countries and, indeed, other developing countries, lost their strategic appeal. Another problem is that foreign technical assistance absorbs over 25 per cent of ODA. The more than 100,000 foreign experts in Africa cost about $4 billion per annum and represent a major leakage of aid resources. The multiplicity of donors, with their differing requirements, also weakens African capacities, as the new parallel aid economy attracts the more skilled civil servants with higher salaries while the remaining civil servants spend more than 50 per cent of their time dealing with a myriad of donors. Much of the aid delivery bypasses national budget processes and weakens the accountability of democratically elected leaders to their own people.

Some of the suggestions put forward by the Secretary-General deserve our immediate and urgent consideration. Two of them, which could have a critical influence, are the complete and full untying of aid and ensuring that technical assistance is used for capacity-building — taking our cue from the aid recipient, which must be in the driver's seat. Another courageous proposal of the Secretary-General, which deserves to be fully supported, is the need to acknowledge that the current system, based on altruism, has not worked well, and that the time has therefore come to institutionalize aid commitments as mandatory obligations with an institutional mechanism to collect such resources from developed countries and transfer them to needy countries.

The Secretary-General has estimated that terms-of-trade losses typically offset 70 per cent of ODA to Africa, and exceed all inflows to Africa — ODA, foreign direct investment, private lending and portfolio flows. The international community must act in concert to ensure that market access to products and manufactured goods from Africa is available as an integrated element of its development process. Rising levels of protectionism in developed country markets, tariff escalations and tariff peaks, protectionism, the frequent and unjustified use of anti-dumping duties and countervailing measures and non-tariff barriers to African exports — and, indeed, to exports from other developing countries — must be effectively removed.

The issue of external debt and the problem of debt overhang deserve urgent consideration. Many African countries have become trapped in a debt cycle whereby new aid is given to service existing debt stock. While such aid shows up as "new resources", that is a mere accounting adjustment, and no new dollars reach the supposed recipient. Additional resources are required — apart from ODA — to fully finance the envisaged debt cancellation.

Another important issue is that of the return of capital squirrelled away from these countries. Capital flight remains pervasive and at the end of the 1990s was estimated at about $350 billion — about the size of Africa's external debt stock. The situation is complicated by the unwillingness of the foreign Governments in whose banks lies the preponderant portion of these massive amounts to make efforts to return this capital to those to whom it rightly belongs: the people of Africa. Africa urgently and desperately needs these funds, not only for development, but also to further its efforts to staunch corruption.

We are convinced that, if we can achieve the mobilization of the required financial resources, African countries will make even greater progress. We commend the people of Africa and their leaders for the significant gains outlined in the report of the Secretary-General, even though the external economic environment remained unfavourable to them. This is a predicament that we and other developing countries share and empathize with.

India has always attached the highest priority to its cooperation with Africa. Within our resource constraints, we are committed to contributing to capacity-building through expanded technical cooperation with the countries of Africa. More than 60 per cent of nearly 1,500 training slots every year in our best institutions, in diverse fields ranging from banking, foreign trade, hydrology and water resources, communications, electronics, satellite, agriculture, small and medium industry, software, renewable energy and the like, are reserved for nominees from African countries.

We have also implemented and initiated technical assistance and infrastructure-building projects in Africa under our cooperation programme, including upgrading of hospitals, establishment of rural health centres, establishment of demonstration farms to promote agricultural sufficiency, establishment of solar energy

lighting systems, manufacturing plants for poultry vaccines, entrepreneur development centres, mechanical training workshops, information technology training centres, and so on.

Cooperation between the private sectors of India and of African countries is also growing at a vibrant pace. Several joint ventures in manufacturing sectors have been established by Indian private-sector companies in Africa. In certain sectors such as railways, Indian industry is involved in a major way in the development of African transport infrastructure.

We propose to continue further in this direction, as we believe that Africa and India are bound by ties that reach way back into history, and that our partnership should embrace the future. We will endeavour to contribute, to the maximum extent possible within our capacities, to the efforts of African countries towards growth and self-reliance, particularly in the area of human resource development, since, in the true spirit of South-South solidarity, it is in their success that our progress also lies.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, I should like to express my delegation's deep appreciation to the Secretary-General and his staff for the progress report before us on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Consideration of this item offers the international community the opportunity to increase its awareness of the development challenges facing the African continent and reflects the increasing attention devoted by the world to Africa's development and growth. It also reaffirms the commitment made by the Member States to support the efforts of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the realization of that objective. Further, it represents yet another opportunity for Africa, in the framework of its determination to realize sustainable development, to shoulder its responsibilities and to rely on itself and on its peoples, as well as on the support of the international community.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General and reaffirm our support for the recommendations therein. We call on the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the international community in its entirety, to redouble their initiatives to support Africa's development efforts. We hope also that the United Nations will promote its cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, the African Development Bank and other specialized regional organizations, in addition to strengthening its partnership with African NGOs at the grass-roots level, which bear the responsibility for coping effectively with development challenges on a daily basis.

The report of the Secretary-General contains good news and bad news. On the one hand, the report indicates that some progress has been achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the mid-term review since the last progress report was submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, particularly in the field of economic reform, the development of the private sector, the strengthening of civil society and the promotion of economic cooperation and integration. Nevertheless, there is still a need to redouble efforts in order to achieve progress in this regard.

On the other hand, prospects are still gloomy in Africa due to the intensification of the debt crisis, the spread of HIV/AIDS and the widespread persistence of abject poverty. At the same time, a sharp decrease has been noted in financial resources and official development assistance and in growth rates, coupled with a considerable reduction in the prices of basic commodities exported by the continent. Furthermore, the continent has become increasingly marginalized in the course of world trade and the globalization process, which has further intensified its problems.

Africa is still the scene of armed conflicts, civil wars and natural disasters, all of which hinder its development efforts. In spite of the particular attention devoted by the Millennium Summit to the special needs of the continent, particularly the promotion of regional and subregional mechanisms for the prevention and settlement of conflicts, the establishment of peace and stability and other measures needed to face development challenges, there is still an acute need for the Organization to continue to accord the highest priority to Africa and for the international community to provide the necessary support for Africa's urgent needs, especially since the programme under consideration will be concluded in two years.

I should like in this regard to express our satisfaction at the fact that light has been shed on the urgent economic and social problems of Africa in the United Nations programme and in the several

conferences and important events that have taken place recently, in particular the two special meetings of the Security Council on HIV/AIDS and security in Africa, and other major United Nations conferences.

We believe that the United Nations strategy for the realization of sustainable development in Africa should focus on the following points.

First, reduction of poverty, which is the greatest challenge to Africa, and the elaboration of effective programmes to gradually eliminate it in that continent. Poverty leads to conflicts, and the reverse is also true. There is a need to mobilize all African resources, and all other resources provided by its partners, in order to realize that objective.

Second, a radical solution to the debt problem is needed, as Africa is one of the continents most affected by this problem, which hinders its economic progress. That could be achieved through the cancelling of African debt in order to achieve sustainable development.

Third, immediate measures must be taken to halt the spread of AIDS, which threatens security and political stability in the continent. We must devise a strategy to guarantee the distribution of medicines at reasonable prices and launch an information campaign that would concentrate on prevention.

Fourth, a solution must be found to the problems of desertification and drought in Africa, particularly in land-locked countries, and bilateral and multilateral assistance must be provided to the affected States in an effort to achieve water security in the continent.

Fifthly, necessary support must be provided to Africa so that it can manage its natural resources, strike a balance between population growth and economic growth, and study how to diversify its economies so that progress can be made in manufacturing African commodities.

Sixthly, priority must be given to the agricultural sector in order to develop the agricultural and rural areas, concentrating on the role of women in rural areas and on using modern techniques that are sustainable and that will help preserve the environment and provide food security. This in turn would lead to a reduction in the costs of importing foodstuffs.

Seventhly, Africa's share of global trade needs to be enhanced by means of fair and reasonable prices for its commodities. Africa should also be allowed to take its due position in the world and in the decision-making process in the economic and political fields.

During the last decade there were several United Nations conferences — from Rio to Cairo, from Copenhagen to Beijing — all of which reflected an international consensus on the need to support Africa and to meet its urgent development needs. Also in the last few years increasing attention has been paid to Africa by various international and regional entities. There were a series of conferences of the francophone countries, meetings in Tokyo, exchanges of views and the summit in Cairo last April — which for the first time included European and African leaders, who focused on promoting cooperation between the two continents. Finally, there was a ministerial meeting between the Chinese and the Africans in Beijing that dealt with activating cooperation between South-South countries and with the need for globalization to advance the interests of all nations and peoples.

If we truly wish to develop Africa, the great Powers should stop exploiting its wealth and resources at reduced prices and should cease interfering in the continent's internal affairs. If the international community has accepted the principle of compensation for some past crimes, why does it not require the colonial Powers to compensate the peoples and countries of Africa for committing the greatest crime in history — colonization and enslavement? The African people should be compensated for all the destruction and usurpation to which they were subjected during the colonial era.

This gloomy picture of Africa will gradually change. The new African generation is growing and becoming greater. It is showing a marked determination to make progress and develop. African leaders and experts continue their efforts, in spite of all the difficulties they are facing and in spite of all attempts to marginalize their continent. They are cooperating to solve their domestic problems and conflicts, to unite and regain their political and economic clout, to make their voices heard and to allow their continent to gain its rightful place on the new globalized map of the world.

Not a single day passes without an initiative for Africa. Two days ago my delegation hosted a small summit of the parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Several heads of State of

neighbouring countries participated in this summit, which considered the various aspects of the problem, in an attempt to find an African solution to it.

In addition, last week Lusaka witnessed the establishment of the first free trade zone in Africa by the summit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). The summit of Sahel and Saharan countries, which includes my country, continues its efforts to achieve cooperation and complementarity among North, Central and Western African nations.

Regional economic blocs in every part of the continent continue to progress, with the utmost determination, towards realizing their economic objectives. These efforts reaffirm Africa's resolve to establish economic blocs that will play an important role in the fields of trade, investment, sustainable development and complementarity, in accordance with the Abuja Agreement of 1991, which is striving to make the vision of the founders of the Organization of African Unity a reality.

Lastly, I would like to reaffirm the importance of the United Nations efforts in support of Africa's development programmes. We look forward to the Economic and Social Council playing a central role in this regard, particularly in this new millennium, and assisting in sparing Africa the disadvantages of globalization and enabling the continent to benefit from the new technology and the information revolution that globalization provides. The efforts of the United Nations and the international community will not succeed, however, without the necessary political will to provide adequate resources for the sustainable development of Africa.

Africa represents the greatest present challenge to the United Nations. As the Secretary-General has so eloquently stated, if the Organization does not succeed in improving the humanitarian, economic and social conditions of its people, this will be a political and moral failure, not only for the Organization, but also for the international community as a whole.

Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, which has taken stock of progress in its implementation, including, in particular, the mobilization of additional resources.

Despite positive signs of economic growth in some parts of Africa, the overall trends in Africa's economic development remain grim. Although worsening poverty and a widening digital divide, heavily influenced by globalization, are common in all developing countries, the situation in Africa is unique and most dire. For instance, per capita income is stagnating at around $700 dollars, and the global market share of African countries has remained at less than 2 per cent. Official development assistance (ODA) has been falling in both nominal and real terms, while the debt burden is worsening. To make matters worse, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is running rampant across the continent, and armed conflicts are prevailing in some parts of the region.

It is, in fact, a daunting challenge to reverse these trends. In this regard, I would like to draw delegates' attention to the commitments that the world's leaders made at the Millennium Summit for combating poverty and underdevelopment, in particular in Africa. In line with the firm commitments undertaken at the Summit, we must make our utmost efforts for the expeditious and successful implementation of the New Agenda.

In view of the fact that such challenges are complex and multifaceted, we must have a comprehensive and integrated approach to take care of the various dimensions with socio-economic, political and institutional ramifications. In this regard, I am confident that the United Nations is uniquely positioned to coordinate activities to meet the desperate needs of Africa and that it possesses a comparative advantage in dealing with global problems.

My delegation would like to highlight two main targets of our actions for implementing the New Agenda. First, there is a pressing need to end armed conflicts, which prevent Africa from achieving political, economic and social development. Conflicts bring with them destruction of life and property, and force substantial diversions to the defence and military sectors of scarce resources that could have been used to revamp the economies. In order to keep or create peace in Africa, the United Nations capability for conflict prevention, peaceful resolution of disputes, peacekeeping, post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction must be further strengthened. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes

of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa.

Secondly, new avenues need to be explored for mobilizing additional resources and promoting exports of African countries. So far the funds and programmes, as well as other agencies of the United Nations, have taken a number of initiatives in this area. However, it is discouraging to note the huge gap between the level of financial resources needed for development and the capital inflows available to meet these needs. In this regard, actions to bridge the widening gap need to be taken both by donors and recipients. The recipient countries must make their best efforts to enhance country ownership and absorptive capacity by promoting good governance and administrative reforms, while the donor community provides increasing financial resources to deserving countries in a predictable and timely manner.

Over the past several years African countries have made a great deal of effort towards export promotion and diversification, in close collaboration with the United Nations system and the donor community. However, Africa's share of the global market remains at less than 2 per cent. To facilitate access to the international markets of products from Africa, redressing the trade barriers alone is not sufficient; better arrangements need to be in place for enhancing financial and technical assistance to address supply side constraints by improving the quality of goods, upgrading infrastructure and promoting marketing and packing skills.

The Republic of Korea has made the utmost efforts for sharing its development experience with other developing countries, and with African countries in particular. In cooperation with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, we hosted the Forum on Asia-Africa Cooperation in Export Promotion, held in Seoul in December 1998. As a follow-up to that Forum, my country invited over 40 African experts and offered a training programme for export promotion in July this year.

In the area of market access, we removed tariffs on 80 commodities of major export interest to least developed countries, effective from this year. To promote South-South cooperation in science and technology, my Government, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, hosted the Forum on South-South Cooperation in Science and Technology in February this year. The Republic of Korea has also increased the scale of ODA since its admission to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996. The volume of ODA in 1999 amounts to over $300 million, and we expect it to increase in the years to come.

Finally, 2001 will be an important year for addressing the issues of development and poverty eradication, as the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the high-level international and intergovernmental event on financing for development and the high-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation are to be held. My delegation sincerely hopes that these events will make great strides in mobilizing political will and financial resources for the sustained development of developing countries, especially for the special needs of the African States.

Mr. Bautista (Philippines): At the outset, my delegation expresses its thanks to the Secretary-General for the report prepared for the Assembly's consideration of this agenda item on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, including measures and recommendations agreed upon at its mid-term review.

I would like to focus on just a few matters of special interest to my delegation. My delegation notes the positive steps taken by Africa in building its capacity to support the process of regional integration, and notes in particular the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in providing technical assistance to support the development of a regional economic community. In particular, we welcome the ECA's efforts to facilitate the formulation of African positions at the Seattle World Trade Organization Conference and the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD X) in Bangkok.

As a founding member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines knows how difficult the process can be, and how much dedication and hard work are needed for meaningful progress towards regional integration. Indeed, we have a special appreciation of the challenges inherent in

integrating a region composed of countries with different historical experiences, at varying levels of economic development, and with differing levels of mutual comfort. We therefore believe that ASEAN can contribute to Africa's integration by sharing its experiences, particularly with regard to the critical first steps.

To this end, the Philippines has participated actively in the Asia-Africa Forum since it was established. We were particularly encouraged by the third Forum, held recently in Kuala Lumpur, in which we shared our experiences with regard to the agricultural sector and the private sector. We also look forward to a lively exchange of experiences at the forthcoming Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in Cotonou, Benin, next month.

My delegation believes that one of the reasons ASEAN has succeeded is because of our efforts to build confidence within the group through the ASEAN approach of resolving problems among ourselves, quietly but resolutely. We believe that a similar approach would help develop a climate conducive to economic growth and social development in Africa. In this regard, we particularly note the Secretary-General's recognition of the progress made in terms of democratization in the region and the encouraging performance of many African economies. Indeed, nothing helps to establish peace better than democracy and emerging prosperity.

While a more tranquil environment may be conducive to growth, my delegation is cognizant of the fact that, for many countries, the resources are simply not available for poverty alleviation projects. This is due to many factors, including insufficient capital inflows, an unmanageable debt burden and the simple lack of consumer-led consumption. My delegation therefore hopes that the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative will succeed where its antecedent did not. We particularly hope that the Initiative will, among other things, take into account capacity to pay. We also voice the concern expressed by many that the enhanced HIPC will divert resources away from official development assistance (ODA), rather than complement it.

With regards to ODA, my delegation notes with disappointment that, while some developed countries have met the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product devoted to ODA, most have not. We strongly encourage these countries to follow the example of the more generous developed nations. We do recognize that some of the motivations for ODA have shifted as a result of the end of the cold war and that many countries, including in Africa, are suffering from a decline in donor interest and the resulting lack of predictability in the flow of aid.

A shift in how aid is provided must therefore take place. This new approach should make aid more predictable and should take into account a country's state of underdevelopment. At the same time, recipient countries must bear the responsibility of ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place to ensure that the poorest and the most vulnerable truly benefit from this aid. My delegation therefore notes with interest the proposal in the addendum to the Secretary-General's report that aid commitments be institutionalized as mandatory obligations. While many will have obvious difficulties with this idea, it is an interesting point to ponder and a basis for what we hope will be fruitful future discussions.

My delegation also wishes to support the observation that the organizations of the United Nations system working in Africa should take a holistic approach. Coordination must therefore be enhanced among the United Nations system's organizations working in Africa. We also share the view that there is a need for harmonizing non-United Nations initiatives through the creation of linkages and the sharing of information.

Finally, I wish to highlight recent Philippine efforts to enhance our contribution to the development of Africa. This year, the Philippines initiated the establishment of diplomatic relations with African countries with which we had no formal relations. In particular, we signed the appropriate joint communiqués with the Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Cape Verde, the Republic of Togo and, just this week, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. We hope to conclude the remaining joint communiqués in the very near future.

The Philippines has also espoused an active policy of pursuing a strong relationship with our brothers in the developing world within the umbrella of South-South cooperation, in both the economic and the technical fields. We look forward to concrete results from sharing, in particular, our experiences in capacity-

and institution-building through third-country training programmes, the sending of experts, exchanges of scholars and fellowships. Indeed, some of these activities are ongoing and are being coordinated by the Technical Cooperation Council of the Philippines.

We hope that, through our efforts to intensify our cooperation with Africa, the Philippines will make a difference in the international community's efforts to help that great continent along the path of development and prosperity.

Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia): At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his progress report on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). The report provides a solid analysis and concrete recommendations for actions at the national and global levels.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, a number of African countries have made substantial progress in putting the right macroeconomic policies in place. Similarly, considerable progress has been achieved in implementing the recommendations of the mid-term review in the promotion of the private sector and the intensification of the democratization process and the strengthening of civil society.

Notwithstanding these efforts, Africa's economic and social problems remain acute. Africa, despite its enormous resources, sadly still remains the world's poorest region. The continent's growth rate in 1990 was 3 per cent and 2.1 per cent for the entire decade of the 1990s. This figure is far below the 7 per cent per annum growth rate in the gross domestic product needed for Africa to meet the international target of reducing poverty by half by the year 2015.

Beyond growth and poverty reduction, Africa is facing a plethora of underdevelopment traps. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is ravaging Africa. AIDS killed 2 million people in Africa in 1998 alone, leaving millions of children orphaned. In the 1990s, the international economic environment, too, was not conducive to Africa's sustaining growth and making a dent in poverty. Official development assistance (ODA), which is the only dependable source of growth and development for many in Africa, continued to decline. ODA declined from $19.7 billion in 1992 to $9.7 billion in 1998. The unpredictability of such flows has contributed to macroeconomic instability and worsened the already fragile economy of African countries.

On the debt front, it is not just that the debt relief being provided is coming too late and too slow, but that the magnitude of assistance in debt relief is quite simply too little. Furthermore, the effectiveness of external transfer, be it in the form of aid or debt relief, has been undermined by the nature of the international delivery system. Aid management and coordination between donors and multilateral financial institutions without the active involvement of beneficiary countries have also undermined aid effectiveness in Africa.

Africa's share of international trade has also been declining. The share of trade as a source of foreign exchange and surplus for investment has been deteriorating since the early 1980s. The sector has been beset by three interrelated problems. These are increasing loss of the market share; the perennial volatility and fall in terms of trade; and unguarded trade liberalization, which has more than doubled the growth of imports to exports. All these factors lead to the worsening of the trade balance and the depletion of resources for investment. According to the report before us, it is estimated that terms-of-trade losses typically offset 70 per cent of official development assistance to Africa, or about 120 per cent of the average gross domestic product, for the period 1970-1997.

As we move forward, it is extremely important to take stock of our strengths and weaknesses that are observed in the implementation of UN-NADAF and take the necessary course of action. We have to implement fully — in spirit and in letter — the recommendations contained in the mid-term review of the New Agenda to resolve the decline of external resources, the debt overhang problem and the deterioration of terms of trade.

It is against this backdrop that we call on our development partners to provide substantial, unconditional and untied aid to Africa commensurate with its development needs. The provision of increased, predictable and effective development aid is pivotal for growth and sustainable development and poverty reduction. In addition, substantial reform is required to improve the aid delivery mechanism for greater effectiveness. As has been articulated in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable

development in Africa" (A/52/871), the principles of ownership, participation, partnership and decentralization need to be further developed to ensure that they are anchored in the recipients' socio-political process.

For Africa to effectively embark on the path of sustainable development, it is necessary for the international community to take fast, deep and broad debt relief initiatives, including outright debt cancellation. Full debt relief to the African countries represents a major resource transfer. Most of the recent economic analyses on the African debt recommend unconditional write-offs as the only realistic solution to the crisis.

We totally concur with the recommendation of the Secretary-General that Africa's development partners, besides providing official development assistance and debt relief, need to provide a package of incentives to encourage their firms to locate in Africa. Such incentives could also entail allowing exporters from Africa unconditional access to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development markets, free of duties. This strategy would have the highest pay-off in terms of transfer of real resources to African producers.

While we call on the international community to live up to the commitment it entered into 10 years ago, we are also fully cognizant that the development of Africa remains the responsibility of African countries. We need to strengthen the reform that we have started in order to create an enabling environment for growth and sustainable development. It is also incumbent on us to see to it that conflicts within and between States are quickly resolved, thus strengthening the climate for meaningful development.

Finally, it is our earnest hope that the final review and appraisal of the New Agenda scheduled for 2002 presents the international community with another opportunity to examine and reorient its approach to partnership with Africa and to come up with innovative strategies for its sustainable development. We believe the cornerstone of this partnership should be ownership by African countries of their own development plans and strategies.

Mr. Osio (Nigeria): I am speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 30, "Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s". I would first of all like to congratulate the Secretary-General on a very enlightening progress report. We commend the report for study and full implementation.

It is worrisome that the development challenges that Africa faced in the 1990s have been carried over to the twenty-first century. Increasing that worry is the fact that these challenges have assumed a more complex and devastating character, calling for urgent and concrete action on the part of everyone if that important continent is not to slip further into misery. Whereas African countries grappled in the 1980s and 1990s with the problem of building modern States founded on democratic principles and a diversified economic base, they are, in addition, now confronted with the frightening spectre of total marginalization, even physical annihilation, in the aftermath of globalization and the HIV/AIDS pandemic ravaging the continent. The countries are in very dire need of the benefits of globalization.

Africa is in danger of being destroyed by HIV/AIDS. The figures contained in the Secretary-General's report regarding the victims of this scourge are indeed frightening: 24 million Africans are living with HIV/AIDS, representing 70 per cent of the world total; 14 million Africans are already dead from the disease; and in 1999 alone 4 million African adults were newly infected with the virus. The implications are obvious. Africa's adult and working population is being progressively depleted to the point that its socio-economic future hangs in the balance. This calls for urgent and serious action by Africa and its partners. In this regard, the HIV/AIDS summit, coming up in Abuja, Nigeria next year, deserves the support of all. With appropriate international support, the Abuja conference should mark a watershed in the international effort to stem the dangerous tide of HIV/AIDS in which humanity, especially Africa, is now inexorably being carried.

The nature and pace that globalization has assumed in the past few years is a source of serious concern for Africa. Africa's progressively decreasing ability to attract foreign direct investment and official development assistance — despite its huge potential — and generally mobilize external financial resources is directly attributable to the negative effects of globalization on the continent. Dwindling access to the world markets and its position on the wrong side of the digital divide further aggravate the continent's dismal situation. Indeed, that Africa's export revenues have

declined steadily in the last two decades — from 3.2 per cent of the world total in 1985 to 1.5 per cent in 1998 — is one serious cause for concern.

If the conventional markets were hard to penetrate, the emerging e-commerce and e-business market environments of the Internet and the World Wide Web are virtually out of the reach of most African countries. Africa needs the support and assistance of the international community to overcome what may be its biggest challenge yet in the development process in the early twenty-first century: entering the information and communication age. In this regard, the gesture of Japan at the Okinawa Group of Eight Summit in setting aside a fund to help developing countries to meet the challenges of information technology is commendable. When operationalized, that gesture is worthy of emulation.

The debt overhang probably constitutes the greatest impediment to development for many African countries. Many African countries have been weighed down for decades by a heavy debt burden. These countries continue to be hampered by the excruciating weight of debt and debt servicing obligations, which consume more than 33 per cent of annual revenues. Any initiative that seeks to promote the rapid development of the continent must therefore include a strategy for technology transfer and for alleviating the debt burden. Not only should the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative be at once expanded to include many more countries, but the initiative should also be adequately funded and redesigned to achieve the desired objective of freeing the resources of these countries, especially in Africa, for development. In fact, debt cancellation for the world's poorest and indebted countries remains the most viable option.

We recognize that the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s represents a veritable and viable blueprint for achieving the rapid socio-economic development of the continent, even in the new century. The strategies for effective mobilization of external and domestic resources, the promotion and invigoration of the private sector and the intensification of the democratic process are all on target in this regard. In addition, a quick and effective resolution of the debt problem and increased market access and better pricing for African commodities would go a long way in contributing to Africa's efforts for and dream of economic revival and renaissance in the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, African countries would make their own efforts at industrialization and diversification of their economic base, thereby intensifying agricultural production, while following the path of sustainable development, preferably in concert with regional partners. But these would be feasible only if Africa paid due attention to the development of its human resource base by providing appropriate education, health care and infrastructure, as well as ensuring the full participation of all segments of society in the task of nation-building. These are very evident in the recommendations contained in the mid-term review of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. But adequate funds are needed to implement and attain these noble objectives.

It is sad that no single country, let alone a whole continent like Africa, can survive on a diet of good recommendations or promises alone. Action, only productive and gainful action, on the recommendations now placed before us can bring about the desired socio-economic growth and development of Africa and its people. The Group of 77 and China are therefore happy to note that Africa, with its huge potential for development and prosperity, is not without friends.

Let me conclude by stating again our appreciation for the good work being undertaken under the United Nations initiative. We can assure the Assembly that the Group of 77 and China are prepared to work assiduously, nationally and in collaboration with the United Nations system and all our partners, for the actualization of the laudable objectives of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa. We count on the support and cooperation of all, in the new and invigorated spirit of globalization and the common destiny of humankind.

Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Africa has demonstrated its commitment and determination to bring opportunity and progress to its peoples. Since the mid-1980s many countries on the continent have made important strides, reforming their economies, improving macroeconomic management, liberalizing markets and trade and making the private sector the engine of growth.

Despite the outbreak of conflicts and natural disasters in parts of the continent, Africa made gains in the 1990s, with rising incomes and exports and, in

some cases, with decreases in severe poverty. Political reforms have led to participatory governance and expanded the horizons of civil liberties.

The progress achieved so far has, however, not been enough to overcome the enormous development challenges facing the continent. While 5 per cent annual growth is needed just to keep the number of the poor from rising, African economies grew by only 3 per cent in 1999, a marginal increase over 1998. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2000 is only expected to increase to 4.2 per cent. The annual growth of 7 per cent estimated to lead to halving poverty by 2015 appears remote, with only three countries attaining that rate in 1999. Average income per capita is lower than at the end of the 1960s.

The Secretary-General's progress report on this agenda item points to other problems: declining export shares in traditional primary products and terms of trade losses which offset concessional loans and grants. Africa's share in global foreign direct investment inflows remained at the low level of 1.2 per cent in 1999, compared with 2.3 per cent in 1997 and 1.2 per cent in 1998. It is clear that, eight years since the adoption of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), the challenge of Africa's development requires even bolder commitment and action.

Only last week my delegation noted in the debate on the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa the failure of the international community to implement policies on market access, debt relief, international financial flows and official development assistance (ODA) needed to leverage Africa's own efforts to achieve sustained growth and development. The Secretary-General's report on the mobilization of additional resources for African development reinforces this point.

We therefore welcome this opportunity to assess the impact of the New Agenda, a compact between Africa and the international community. We believe that such an assessment would set the stage for the evaluation of the New Agenda in 2002 and help map out the way forward. We anxiously look forward to the evaluation.

There are several initiatives on Africa, along with other events also focusing on Africa, planned for the coming year. While this proliferation may give the mistaken impression of progress, we believe that the benefits from all the initiatives on Africa will come from our ability to consider them within a holistic framework. In this regard, consideration of the implementation of UN-NADAF must take into account all the other relevant processes, such as the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS and the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development.

As important as the review process is, Africa cannot wait until 2002 for the outstanding issues critical to its development to be addressed. The Secretary-General's report, as well as reports by other major international institutions, provide adequate input for effective and immediate action. In this regard, we appreciate the efforts of both bilateral and multilateral partners in the context of Africa's development. We regret, however, that the contributions of some of our partners have yet to match their potential or expressed commitment.

In this connection, we reiterate the proposals that have been made by our delegation, among others, for a real commitment to write off Africa's debt and reach agreement on market access for products of critical interest to African countries in a coherent manner to ensure conditions for Africa's growth and development. This means putting priority on resolving, within the shortest possible time, trade issues over agriculture, textiles and leather outside the framework of the comprehensive round of trade negotiations being canvassed.

We also urge the major industrial countries to consider providing additional capital to the World Bank, as well as their national institutions, to expand the possibilities for export credit and investment guarantee schemes in leveraging private capital to Africa, especially to sectors with greater forward and backward linkages.

Official development assistance (ODA) remains a major catalyst for the attraction of private capital flows. It is also an essential source of funding for the capacity-building needed in Africa to enable the continent to take advantage of the opportunities created by globalization. Therefore, the decline of ODA to Africa is a matter of great concern. We must reconsider

the basis of the changing motivation for development assistance, as well as the need for a coordinated approach to ODA that maximizes its impact. Linking ODA to conditionality poses grave problems for our efforts to eradicate poverty, particularly our commitment to the most vulnerable segments of our societies.

It is important to underscore the need to focus attention on the pervasive capital flight from Africa. Africa must, in cooperation with the relevant international bodies, design policy frameworks to ensure stability that encourages the retention of foreign currency on the continent. It is clear, however, that other forms of net transfer of resources abroad are also harmful to Africa's economy. In this respect, measures should be taken to reverse the net resource transfer abroad that sometimes results from the implementation of aid programmes.

The diverse initiatives which have been undertaken at the bilateral and multilateral levels must feed into the larger framework of the New Agenda. Our goal must be to seek interlinkages, coherence and comprehensiveness to ensure that the solutions meet the challenges and that they create the critical mass envisaged in the Secretary-General's report.

We recognize the work being done by the United Nations system to assist the efforts of African countries in education, health, governance, information technology, population and South-South cooperation, among others. Their sustained efforts to deepen the focus on Africa is commendable, and we encourage them to continue building on their partnerships, including with the World Bank and others, to increase the impact of their activities. We urge all countries in a position to do so to increase their contributions to the funds and programmes to enable them to achieve their objectives in programme countries.

Ultimately, no one can change the fate of Africa except Africans themselves. We still need to pursue with urgency the outstanding work in the process of economic and political reforms. Our commitment to zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes in government and for civil conflict must be demonstrated through proactive support for and encouragement of good governance.

Every day that each of us, as partners and owners of Africa's development, fails to take the bold but right decisions for Africa's development, we add to the magnitude of the continent's development challenge. We must resolve to use the process of the UN-NADAF review to change the dynamic of Africa's development agenda in order to launch Africa on a truly sustainable course of progress.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided to make Africa one of its priorities for the 1990s, or even its top priority. In this context, it unanimously adopted the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). This New Agenda, which represented a real contract of solidarity between the international community and Africa, defined the commitments and the responsibilities of both parties.

In two years we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of the New Agenda. Is not this a good time to ask ourselves what has become of these commitments? Has the Agenda become just one more of the many unimplemented declarations? These questions need to be asked because of the dwindling interest in the debate on Africa, specifically the debate on the New Agenda for its development in the 1990s.

My delegation was very interested in the Secretary-General's mid-term report on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Naturally, my country welcomes the efforts made by the international community to provide the African continent with additional financial resources to enable it to improve the standard of living of its people and to combat poverty.

Cameroon recognizes the important role played by Governments, the United Nations agencies and organs and the other partners in promoting a number of projects involving the private sector, intensifying the democratization process and strengthening civil society.

For their part, the vast majority of African countries have taken steps to ensure far-reaching economic reforms within sectoral and structural frameworks agreed during the mid-term review. Many countries have had encouraging results, sometimes, if not always, at the cost of enormous sacrifices.

However, today we note, as emphasized in the report of the Secretary-General, that the objectives set in the New Agenda in terms of mobilizing external

resources have not been achieved. In fact, official development assistance to Africa has declined, from $19.7 billion in 1992 to $9.7 billion in 1998. As for foreign direct investment, it is being diverted from Africa despite the incentives put in place by African countries and despite the continent's great potential. Meanwhile, Africa's external debt burden, estimated at $350 billion, has continued to grow in spite of debt-relief measures intended to lighten it adopted in the context of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative.

It is clear from these observations that the New Agenda has not met our expectations. Let us recall that the United Nations New Agenda was intended to be a catalyst, a political engine that would drive all African development activities within and outside the continent. In that regard, initiatives to promote the development of Africa should encourage the implementation of the Agenda and should avoid the overlapping that has a negative impact on the implementation of agreed measures. In the view of my delegation, implementation has been impaired by insufficient political will, insufficient coordination and insufficient coherence. This has resulted in a diffusion of energies, a decline in the level of activities, inadequate mobilization of resources, and the inefficient use of existing resources. Corrective measures must therefore be taken if we wish to lend fresh momentum to the implementation of UN-NADAF, an Agenda that had given rise to such high hopes.

Here, we think the recommendations made by the Committee on Programme and Coordination at its thirty-eighth through fortieth sessions are of particular interest; they could be extremely useful. It is significant that, in preparing his report, the Secretary-General drew on those recommendations of the Committee on Programme and Coordination.

Let me recall some of what we see as the key recommendations. With a view to avoiding wasteful overlapping among the various United Nations programmes for Africa, the Committee on Programme and Coordination identified the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa as an implementing arm of the New Agenda. The Committee also strongly advocated the implementation of a strategic master plan setting out the directions to be taken by various partners, identifying goals, defining evaluation mechanisms and providing for the sharing of responsibilities among the various actors.

The Secretariat was to play the role of advocate-general for Africa by continuing to mobilize international public opinion in favour of the cause of African development. The Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries was to monitor closely the implementation of UN-NADAF and, when necessary, to sound the alarm. Finally, the United Nations Development Programme and the Economic Commission for Africa were to design specific operational activities.

Have that concept and that division labour, approved by the General Assembly, been respected? There is every reason to doubt it. Certainly, the haziness resulting from such non-respect seems to have a great deal to do with the deplorable lack of progress to date towards implementation of the Agenda.

Finally, the Committee on Programme and Coordination advocated an independent evaluation of the programme that, at the time of the final review and appraisal scheduled for 2002, would make it possible objectively to measure the quantity and quality of resources and programmes, along with their real impact on the sustainable development of Africa. We are pleased that the Economic and Social Council acted on that recommendation: at its 1999 substantive session, the Council declared that following the 2002 final review it would task independent experts with evaluating the implementation of the Agenda. Here, we agree with the Committee on Programme and Coordination that for such an evaluation to be objective, its terms of reference must be defined in advance.

My delegation makes these observations in the light of the momentum generated for the New Agenda at the Millennium Summit, during which the international community decided that Africa remained its top priority. The Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which confirmed that priority, reiterated the determination of heads of State or Government and of States Members of the United Nations to stand firmly by Africa in its struggle to attain lasting peace and sustainable development. Africa, which is facing so many old and new problems — with the new ones amounting to a pandemic — expects a great deal from the concrete manifestations of this renewed solidarity.

As I approach the end of my remarks, I would recall the appeal for Africa that Pope John Paul II made at Yaoundé:

> "Africa is a continent in which countless human beings — men, women, children and young people — have in a sense been left by the wayside, ill, wounded, powerless, marginalized and abandoned. They have a crying need for good Samaritans who will come to their assistance".

These concerns, as expressed in the words of the Holy Father, are the same as those expressed in the Millennium Declaration, particularly in the paragraph relating to solidarity. May the commitments made by heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit give rise to a real response to this appeal from Africa — the continent of the future. We have said this before, and we repeat it today: Africa will remember.

Mr. Hønningstad (Norway): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the considerable effort that has gone into the report before us. The activities and initiatives presented in the report show an admirable scope and diversity. It gives an interesting, although not altogether encouraging, picture of the situation in Africa. In spite of the continent's natural resources, Africa scores lower on key development criteria — notably, economic growth — than other regions of the world. Of course, the reasons for the slow development do not lie only with Africa. The debt burden is excessive, official development assistance flows are too low, trade obstacles to Africa's exports are considerable and the digital divide is getting wider. While the world is richer than ever before, the North-South gap continues to widen.

In this context I would like to touch upon one of the most urgent challenges facing the African States. Poverty reduction is crucial in terms of economic development, political stability and regional and global security, and economic development is fundamental to achieving poverty reduction. We therefore believe that the international trend of reduced disbursements of development assistance must be reversed. My Government is currently working on a plan to increase Norway's development assistance to 1 per cent of gross domestic product. Special emphasis will be placed on increased cooperation with our African partners.

However, neither bilateral assistance nor multilateral arrangements can assume the responsibility that rests at the national level, nor would that be desirable. The main responsibility for development strategies leading to sustained progress rests, therefore, with Africa. It is African countries themselves that must show leadership to generate economic growth.

Development strategies will best succeed when implemented in a stable political environment and aimed at both economic and social progress, including health, education and gender equality issues. Accountable democratic Governments and the rule of law are vital elements in any development process.

Since the beginning of the 1990s we have seen many African States opt for economic and political reform. Unfortunately, we have also seen the outbreak of new wars and, in several countries, continuing civil strife, dashing our hopes for a more peaceful future for Africa. This turn of events may threaten the stability and future prospects of large parts of the continent.

The report rightly emphasizes the responsibility of African countries for positive developments in Africa. Increasing African capacity with regard to peacekeeping operations and conflict prevention will contribute to the stability of the continent. The role of the international community should primarily be to strengthen and support efforts and initiatives taken by the African countries themselves. This is part of our global responsibility, and we look forward to such cooperation with our African partners.

In many African countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the AIDS pandemic is ravaging whole communities. We agree with the observation in the report that without a renewed effort in many countries the AIDS pandemic may erode all the progress that has been made since political independence. The International Partnership against AIDS in Africa should be highlighted here, as a new and innovative initiative to turn this tragic situation around. We also recall the important debate in the Security Council in January on the impact of HIV/AIDS on peace and security in Africa, and the follow-up meeting in the Economic and Social Council in February.

I should like to point out that Norway's programmes for development cooperation with our African partners have increasingly addressed questions of governance, democracy-building and human rights — factors which are crucial in order to prevent conflicts from erupting. We fully endorse the report's recommendation that African countries should pay attention to ensuring accountability, transparency and

the rule of law in their efforts to improve governance and increase the involvement of civil society. My Government will continue to support programmes and institutions that pay heed to these guiding principles, which constitute the basis of sustainable development.

In conclusion, I should like to recall part VII of the Millennium Declaration, entitled "Meeting the special needs of Africa", which in our view constitutes more than a blueprint for sustainable development on the African continent. It is an obligation for the world community, in particular the donor countries, to support Africa in its struggle to achieve sustainable development in all sectors and to bring Africa into the mainstream of the world economy.

Mr. Mostafa Chowdhury (Bangladesh): The international community has been making efforts to bring the special needs of Africa to the forefront of the global development agenda for some time. At long last we are openly discussing, in different global forums, issues of African development. Many measures are being suggested; many commitments — although they are far from adequate — have also been made. But, sadly, our actions are not keeping pace with our words — indeed, they are lagging far behind.

The development problems of Africa, the home of 33 out of the 48 least developed countries, have now been widely recognized. The Secretary-General's report, in the addendum, describes the resource issues in some detail. I will refer briefly to some of the facts.

The overall flow of official development assistance (ODA) has continued to diminish globally; Africa has not been spared. There has been a 24 per cent yearly reduction since 1990; ODA declined from $19.7 billion in 1992 to $9.7 billion in 1998. This is hurting the African countries most of all, as they have little opportunity to mobilize sufficient domestic resources to undertake vital projects like the building of infrastructure and telecommunication networks. These are among the essential preconditions for attracting foreign investment. Aggregate resource flows to Africa declined from $26 billion in 1997 to $17.1 billion in 1998, a staggering reduction in a one-year period.

Africa's debt burden is increasing, despite the various well publicized measures taken to reduce the debt overhang. Debt service as a percentage of exports was 30 per cent in 1999, compared with 21.3 per cent in 1997. Indeed, it is difficult to discern what significant improvements the current initiatives have made.

Africa's loss of global market share for the period 1970-1997 amounted to $68 billion. That stands in stark contrast to the sharp increase in the volume of global trade. There has been an increasing loss in market share for Africa's traditional exports.

The world has agreed to reduce absolute poverty by half by the year 2015. To achieve this target, a minimum growth rate of 7 per cent, continued for the next 15 years, has to be ensured. In fact, average growth in the last decade was a mere 2.1 per cent.

Per capita income in 1998 slipped to $668, compared to $749 in 1980. This has give rise to an increase in the number of people living in poverty, rather than a reduction.

These are but a few examples of the deterioration of the development scenario in Africa and the diminishing inflow of resources in a region where the need for increased international support is widely recognized. In the last decade, the world has seen a tremendous increase in international trade and in the accumulation of global wealth. Although this has been mostly concentrated in the industrialized world, some developing countries have registered notable success; many others also shared a spin-off benefit. But Africa has been left out.

African countries, like other developing nations, have been fighting to overcome underdevelopment. However, their task has been especially difficult, as a number of complicating factors, on a magnified scale, are holding back the progress they otherwise could achieve.

Poverty is pervasive in Africa, with a high concentration of people living in conditions of absolute poverty in many of the sub-Saharan countries, which makes it extremely difficult to mobilize domestic resources. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is especially acute in Africa, robbing it of the vitality of the younger generation. Millions of adults are dying or becoming debilitated. Millions of children are being orphaned and face an uncertain future with little hope. The health-care system is overwhelmed and cannot deal with the many public health threats, such as the scourge of malaria and tuberculosis.

The major global conferences of the 1990s set out guidelines on how to fight underdevelopment and

poverty. Most countries have chalked out their own national programmes of action to put the agreed principles to work. It is ironic, however, that at a time when national machinery is poised to deliver a much greater output for any unit of investment, international support and assistance are drying up. It is also unfortunate that we are not coming up with bold initiatives to join forces with Africa in the fight against the root causes of underdevelopment.

African countries are bravely fighting against many odds. There are many factors, however, which are beyond their individual efforts. The international community should be much more forthcoming, in a spirit of genuine partnership and support, in Africa's struggle to break out of the vicious circle of underdevelopment and poverty. There is an urgent and desperate need to combine our individual efforts to lend support to Africa, and we have a moral obligation to do so.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): African countries made tremendous efforts to reform and improve their domestic, economic, political and social environments during the 1990s, and in so doing encountered major obstacles and difficulties. Those efforts, as is noted in the report (A/55/350) of the Secretary-General, have led to progress in the fields addressed by the mid-term review in 1995, namely consolidating the process of economic adjustments and reform, encouraging the private sector and enhancing democracy and civil society.

The reform and development of any society is primarily the responsibility of that society. However, several major obstacles are impeding the efforts of most African countries to overcome the challenges of poverty and disease and to open up prospects for development. Foremost among those obstacles are rapid developments in the international economic environment and the failure by the international community, despite several initiatives to that end, to create a suitable mechanism to integrate the African countries, in particular the least developed ones, into the international economy.

International economic crises, turmoil and upheavals that occurred towards the end of the 1990s underscored the urgent need for internal reform among the developing nations in order to adapt to the new international realities. At the same time, they reflected the presence of certain shortcomings in the framework of international trade and financial institutions, which should be decisively redressed.

In this context, I wish to state frankly that most of the solutions offered to the developing nations tend to emphasize the internal, domestic dimension while largely ignoring the negative impact of imbalances in the system of international trade and finance. The speedy pace of globalization, which has given rise to rapid movement in capital markets and to strong competition, has led to practices that tend to restrict trade. These practices, which include anti-dumping policies and the application of rigid, inflexible sanitary and environmental measures and standards, are being misused in order to restrict the exports of the developing nations to the developed countries. This has led to major economic losses for the developing nations in general and the African countries in particular.

In addition, there has been a continued decline in official development assistance, to the extent that the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product has become almost impossible to achieve, in view of the poor performance of most donor countries in this respect. There is no sign that this objective will be attained any time soon, even though official development assistance remains the main source of financing for development in most African countries.

Furthermore, Africa's share of foreign direct investment does not exceed 6 per cent of total investments geared to the developing countries, and the AIDS pandemic is ravaging the continent, killing millions annually and threatening economic and social stability in several countries of the continent. This is by any standard a truly tragic situation.

Efforts at social, political and economic reform by the African countries remain a sine qua non for the realization of their aspirations to development and progress. However, those efforts should be accompanied by a serious international undertaking to enable the African countries to continue their march towards development, through the opening of markets to the products of those countries and by increasing official development assistance, as we have already mentioned.

In this context, I wish to underline the need for the forthcoming Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in Brussels next May, and the

High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development to deal seriously and realistically with the needs of the African countries and to redress the imbalances in the present international trade and financial systems, with a view to creating an external environment conducive to helping those countries achieve sustainable development.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I would like to inform members that a draft resolution on this item will be submitted at a later date.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform members that document A/INF/55/3/Add.3 contains a revised programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings of the General Assembly for the remainder of November 2000. It had been circulated to delegations this morning and is also available at the documents distribution centre in the General Assembly Hall.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to inform members that the remaining two items on the agenda for this morning — namely agenda item 44, "Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers", and agenda item 180, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States," will be taken up this afternoon at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.58

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

58th plenary meeting
Friday, 10 November 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 44

Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/387)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.28)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Lesotho to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.28.

Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho): At the end of the twentieth century, the year 2000 problem (Y2K) threatened computers and digital systems around the world. Left unaddressed, Y2K would have seriously disrupted vital financial, business, health and government services and could have interrupted electricity and telecommunications. While primary responsibility for addressing the problem rested with each organization delivering the service, a unique international cooperative effort was organized to provide mutual assistance among the Member States of the United Nations. As a result, the world entered the twenty-first century experiencing only minor Y2K problems. Draft resolution A/55/L.28 captures the success that was that unique international initiative.

Because the most critical aspects of Y2K were addressed successfully, the full extent of the threat it posed to everyday life will never be known. However, in the late 1990s a broad consensus emerged that Y2K could cause at least four serious problems. First, Y2K failures could cause serious social and economic harm. Computer software and hardware that supported financial processes, ranging from global financial flows, to government payrolls and benefits, to small business inventories, were highly vulnerable because of the extensive use of dates in those systems. Y2K-induced errors could cause many of those systems to stop working entirely.

Secondly, public overreaction to Y2K fears could cause serious hardships. Fears that supply chains would be disrupted could cause hoarding of scarce commodities, such as pharmaceuticals. Fear that the financial system would not be ready for Y2K could cause a run on banks. Developing countries were particularly at risk with regard to potential panic selling of investments perceived as risky and the disruption of their tourist industries. Although a few dislocations did occur, no real panic ensued, because people believed correctly that the world was ready for Y2K.

The third risk was a political one. Y2K failures or panic lasting more than a few days could cause political instability. Indeed, the importance of maintaining public confidence in the Y2K preparations became the preoccupation of the global Y2K team in the last months of 1999.

Fourthly, widespread serious computer problems would likely reduce public confidence in information technology, slowing growth in that industry and

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00-74049 (E)

potentially derailing technology-led economic growth world-wide.

Beyond those risks, however, Y2K offered a variety of valuable opportunities to the world. Among nations, it presented an opportunity to create and test a new form of organization — the first "virtual" international organization — to address a global problem. Y2K was seen as a common menace that threatened every country. Economic and security interdependence meant that no country was an island. The problem's clear-cut nature and unyielding deadline gave urgency and clarity to the work. Sharing of information about workable approaches to the problem and about progress towards readiness became paramount. That environment fostered the creation of an agile but official mechanism to validate and share quality information around the world.

It is against this background that I recommend to this Assembly the adoption by consensus of draft resolution A/55/L.28.

Mr. Stuart (Australia): Australia welcomes the Secretary-General's report evaluating the outcome of the steps taken in the United Nations system and by Member States to resolve the problems of the year 2000 date conversion for computers. My delegation would also like to acknowledge and applaud the efforts of the Permanent Representative of Lesotho, one of the leaders in this field.

The Secretary-General's report contains a lot of good news, and, as is often the case with success stories of the United Nations, this good news does not seem to have attracted much attention. My delegation would like today to highlight some of the benefits derived from the concerted and intensive approach, nationally and internationally, aimed at managing the so-called "millennium bug". We also want to draw out some of the lessons learned from our Y2K experience. I shall focus largely on Australia's experience but do so acknowledging not only that many other countries have their own success stories to recount, but also that the United Nations system's own efforts deserve recognition.

The Y2K problem arose because programmers entered dates in computer code without reference to the century. That may have seemed like a good idea at the time, but the expediency of reducing the cost of storing computer data overlooked the longer-term costs of ensuring that programmes would run after 31 December 1999. With the approach of the centenary year, computer users, and the many more who relied on computer systems, began to focus increasingly sharply on the prospect that computer systems might recognize the year 2000 — represented in computer code by the two digits "00" — as the year 1900.

As far back as 1997, the Australian Government was convinced that Y2K was a real threat. The potential economic impact, security risks and consequences of inaction called for a pro-active role in countering that threat by stringent testing, remedial measures and contingency planning.

The written version of our statement, which has been circulated, provides a summary of the institutional, policy and financial dimensions of the Australian Government's response. In short, by September 1999, the Australian Government was confident enough to adopt a "business as usual" approach to the critical date change period. This confidence proved to have not been misplaced.

By mid-December 1999, it was announced that all Australian Federal Government agencies were Y2K-compliant. This task involved testing almost 3,500 systems in over two and a half years at a cost of over half a billion dollars in Australian terms. A similar process of testing and taking remedial measures occurred across our private sector.

Mr. Mungra (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Australian Federal Government departments reported only three minor incidents. These were assessed as low or very low impact because the problems were fixed within a very short time. The Australian private sector reported a low number of incidents. The same pattern was evident internationally — no systemic disruption, but some concrete glitches. The Secretary-General's report states that, in the first place, within the United Nations system a similarly thorough approach to Y2K readiness produced a similar result — in essence, no serious problems. In the second place, reporting from units around the world to the United Nations showed no significant Y2K disruption.

Y2K was the first global challenge attributed to information technology. By its nature, it required effective action against an immutable deadline. Unaddressed, it had the potential to cause serious

disruption to key services around the globe. International networks of cooperation, information sharing and teamwork proved a unique success, with many examples of nations' sharing information and cooperating with those nations less technologically advanced.

In Australia's case, we provided technical assistance to Pacific rim nations through the Agency for International Development. The Y2K Project Office also shared and disseminated information about Australia's preparedness with other countries. Our Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade monitored international Y2K issues and, through its overseas posts, offered information-sharing arrangements with regional and global agencies and offices. Australia was also an active participant in the arrangements established by the United Nations itself, including the International Y2K Cooperation Centre and the work of the United Nations Joint Situation Centre.

My delegation believes that we can draw a lot from the way that the Y2K challenge was met. Some of the lessons learned relate to our national experience. For one thing, Y2K induced Australians to review and improve their understanding of society's reliance on, and hence its potential vulnerability to, computerized systems. It prompted greater awareness of the redundancy and inefficiency of systems in use. Organizations had to take stock of their technological assets and identify mission-critical systems. Business and Government organizations — and, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, United Nations bodies — developed contingency plans for system failure. Through the Y2K compliance exercise, organizations took the opportunity to upgrade their systems as a cost-effective way of removing constraints inherent in their existing environment. The resulting boost to our technological infrastructure enhanced Australia's position in the digital economy and positioned Australians to take greater advantage of e-commerce and on-line market opportunities into the future.

Cooperation between the public and private sectors was enhanced in the face of a common, immutable and unique threat. Australia also used the Y2K exercise to improve coordination of our emergency response mechanisms. As was the case with many other countries, this resulted in Australia's emerging from the potential threat of failures with a greater understanding of how different areas of our society can communicate and work together effectively.

Internationally, we can also draw on some positive outcomes. We were conscious of becoming part of a wider process, a global partnership, through the Year 2000 Project Office. This underscored the benefits of information-sharing, coordinated responses and transparent and comprehensive information dissemination.

While some nations embarked on preparations to minimize potential Y2K disruptions with years to prepare, late-starting nations benefited from the knowledge acquired by the early starters through information-sharing. Such cooperation provided a framework for multilateral mutual assistance in a way that demonstrated that public/private and cross-border transactions and interactions could work positively for common benefit.

We can reasonably conclude that the nations which shared information and conducted self-reporting exercises on Y2K in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation are all the more likely to work together in the future, facing similar challenges. The Y2K experience may be viewed as a wake-up call. It alerted many of us to our reliance on computer systems and it also forced the public sector and industry and, with the United Nations assistance, the developed and the developing countries to work together under the pressure of an immutable deadline. It also showed the potential for more effective avenues of communication, both domestically and internationally. Y2K was not simply an information-technology issue — it was a challenge to the way we live our daily lives in those parts of the world that have come to depend on computer systems and it was a challenge that saw the world unite for the common good. This was indeed an encouraging start to our new century.

Mr. Sotirov (Bulgaria): On behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, I am pleased to reaffirm Bulgarian support for the activities undertaken within the United Nations system and with Member States to resolve the Y2K problem. My delegation would also like to convey its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the evaluation of the outcome of the steps taken to address the so-called "millennium bug".

I wish also to congratulate the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics and its Chairman, Ambassador Percy Mangoaela, for the excellent work they have done. We appreciate all the Organization's efforts to manage the year 2000 issue. My Government

also highly values the support provided to the countries in transition provided by the dissemination of relevant information on funding possibilities, the guidelines summarizing best practices for assessing Y2K and establishing contingency plans on the national and international levels.

As regional Coordinator for the Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries, Bulgaria has attached great importance to enhancing cooperation in order to insure a timely and effective response to the challenge and to work together with its neighbours to address the threats the problem could pose.

The regional Y2K cooperation centre has received significant aid and support for national and regional initiatives from the United Nations Development Programme. It promoted increased strategic cooperation and action among Governments, peoples and the private sector to identify and correct potential adverse effects of the year 2000 compliance issue on both society and economy. The regional group undertook several preventive measures to achieve coordination and communication among countries. It established a mechanism for the dissemination of information concerning the problem and created and maintained a comprehensive Web site receiving over 8,900 hits. Three regional conferences and a workshop of national Coordinators hosted by the Bulgarian Government were among the organizational activities of the group. Countries actively participated in the sharing of experience, knowledge, skills, solutions and information on significant events and countermeasures taken to ward off the bug.

Our crisis strategy went through a staged process involving the identification of vulnerable sectors, risk assessment, the remediation of critical systems and software and the development of contingency plans. The group implemented a comprehensive Y2K plan to facilitate decision-making in the event of the crisis. We focused on the following priority areas: energy, telecommunications, nuclear power, banking, finance, oil, gas, shipping and ports and aviation. To handle the complex issues, we concentrated on anticipation, preparation, the prevention of panic, and responsiveness to emerging problems. We supported the use of standardized public status reports and coordinated the preparation efforts with the International Y2K Cooperation Centre.

As a result of the extensive preparedness at both regional and national levels, the region managed a smooth transition to the year 2000, and no major Y2K-related problems have been reported.

The solution of the Y2K problem for the Bulgarian Government means the achievement of pragmatic goals — protection of the physical integrity of the citizens, protection of crucial components of the social and economic infrastructure and minimizing the potential losses to the lowest possible.

Starting work on the Y2K challenge at the beginning of 1998, we also made intensive efforts to build real public confidence about the measures taken to resolve the problem. There were many messages to citizens within the public information programme. Transparency, open discussion and public right to information are of crucial importance, because they raise the awareness level and prevent panic among the population. The coordination with the private sector was one of the most important measures undertaken by my Government to ensure the successful Y2K transition.

The preparation for the Y2K project, the collaboration and solidarity forged by the common concerns among developed and developing countries, system agencies, international and regional Y2K centres, Governments, business and industry proved to be, as Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette put it, the United Nations in action.

In this regard, one of the most remarkable results is the general awareness reached throughout the United Nations system about the importance of the communications revolution and the need to harness its potential, to meet together its new challenges.

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere hope that we will continue our activities in the same spirit of understanding and constructive cooperation.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. We will proceed to consider draft resolution A/55/L.28.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.28. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/55/L.28 was adopted (resolution 55/21).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 44?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 180

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

Draft resolution (A/55/L.6/Rev.1)

The Acting President: I call on Mr. Santiago Nsobeya Efuman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Equatorial Guinea, to introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. Nsobeya Efuman (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States", is sponsored by the following countries: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Belgium, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

I would like to express the deep gratitude of the member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which my country, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, has the honour to represent, for this historic opportunity to institutionalize, in the multisectoral context, cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States.

On behalf of the countries of the Community and their respective heads of State, the current Chairman of the Community, His Excellency Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, and myself, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the addition of this item on cooperation between the United Nations and the Community to the agenda. Our thanks also go to all the members of the Bureau for supporting our request.

To introduce a constructive dynamic into the debate, I would like to tell the General Assembly that in speaking about formal cooperation between the United Nations and ECCAS we are not discussing an entirely new subject, since the United Nations has been signing cooperation agreements with other African regional economic communities intended to develop the five pillars within the framework of the construction of the African Economic Community, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Other universal, regional or subregional institutions maintain fruitful cooperation with the United Nations. What has changed fundamentally, thanks to the existence of the United Nations, is the irreversibility of the phenomenon of the globalization that is transforming our world. This is leading to, above all, increasing interdependence and extraordinary complexity in our evolution.

Cooperation with the United Nations, for which Central Africa is pressing, will come at a time when reforms are being introduced into the Organization to better adapt it to the new requirements of the world.

In this new context, while expressing gratitude for the positive contribution of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa for its contribution to restoring confidence among the member States of the Community, the heads of State recommended at the special summit of 23 June 2000, held in Libreville, Gabon, a stronger and more sustained presence of the United Nations alongside ECCAS and the establishment in that context of direct, multisectoral cooperation between the United Nations system and the Community to promote economic development and integration, as well as to promote peace, stability, democracy and respect for human rights in the subregion.

But it is also an invitation to work for building an increasingly fairer world, one with greater solidarity, one that will reflect the principles of the Charter to which our peoples and nations are committed — principles that our heads of State and Government have reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration and unanimously adopted during the Millennium Summit held in New York in September.

We know that the scenario is daunting, but our determination is on a par with the challenge. We have found that in order to succeed we must reinforce our subregional institution. This was the spirit of the commitment and of the decisions taken by ECCAS heads of State and Government during the Malabo Summit in June 1999, whose main objective was to give ECCAS the ways and means fully to discharge its

role of coordinator and catalyst of the integration under way in our subregion.

Within that general context I would like now to briefly introduce the draft resolution which is presented for the Assembly's consideration. The preamble summarizes the following ideas.

First, it relates to the statute of ECCAS and the objectives established by its members. We find the same idea expressed in the fourth preambular paragraph, which recalls the importance of the ninth regular session of ECCAS, where our States decided to resume the activities of ECCAS and give it the necessary tools to discharge its mandate.

Secondly, mention is made of the establishment of a Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The creation of this Committee has in fact been a decisive step in the establishment of broader cooperation with the United Nations. The work programme, thanks to the support of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, has made it possible to have better cooperation and political coordination by our States.

Thirdly, the importance of the Millennium Declaration is underscored.

Fourthly, we recall our confidence in the action of the United Nations and our conviction that its support and experience are indispensable resources for the achievement of our objectives of peace, security and development.

Furthermore, in the operative part, it is intended to request, through the establishment of cooperation between the United Nations and ECCAS, support from the world Organization to help our States deal with the challenges that globalization and instability pose to its development. We find this concern specifically addressed in the first and second paragraphs.

In the third paragraph, the General Assembly reaffirms the wisdom of the support that the Secretary-General contributes to members of ECCAS aimed at reinforcing confidence and the possibility of establishing a climate of peace in which to promote the rule of law and democratic values. I should like to recall here that this support required the establishment of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and it has helped to mitigate the absence of an instrument for the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

With the creation of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, this institutional shortcoming has been solved. However, in order to carry out its missions effectively, our young institution will need the sustained support of the United Nations. In this specific field, we are working to avoid all kinds of overlapping. For reasons of coordination and rationalization, we will in future attempt to deal with issues of peace and security, traditionally dealt with within the framework of the Advisory Committee, as a part of the overall cooperation between the United Nations and the ECCAS.

The fourth paragraph reinforces this idea and mentions the fields where sustained support is indispensable to ensure the success of the initiatives undertaken by the countries of Central Africa aimed at the creation of conditions for peace and sustainable development in the subregion.

This same request is reaffirmed in the fifth paragraph, which stresses the need for coordinated action by the entire United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, for questions that have to do with the debt which is undermining the efforts of the countries of Central Africa.

The sixth paragraph reinforces this idea, calling on the international community to bring about greater synergy in support of the determination of the countries of Central Africa to establish a climate of peace and security favourable to investment and economic and social progress, which are indispensable for the wellbeing of the peoples of the subregion.

The seventh, eighth and ninth paragraphs are intended to ensure the permanence of this growing cooperation and to allow it time to mature and produce all of the results that we hope for.

It is encouraging that the examination of this point was part of the Millennium Assembly, which produced an important declaration that guides the development of our Organization into the twenty-first century.

We welcome the fact that the heads of State and Government of the United Nations have especially underscored the imperative need to support efforts leading to the consolidation of democracy, peace and development in Africa.

Solemnly stating today to the Member States of the United Nations the determination of Central Africa

to play a bigger role in the dynamics of globalization, we are fully aware of the fact that we will be better able to achieve success if we can count on the solidarity and support of the entire United Nations system.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) *(spoke in French)*: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, the Central and East European countries associated with the European Union, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The other associated countries, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

The inclusion of this new item on the agenda is entirely justified. Subregional integration is under way in Africa and is clearly increasingly becoming a fact of life in that continent. This is something the United Nations must continue to support, for it may, after all, make a useful contribution to achieving the goals of the Charter.

The European Union also encourages the development of integration in Africa. The European Union/Africa Summit held in Cairo on 4 April was an opportunity to state that very clearly. The European Union sees this as one of the keys to development and stability in Africa. Of course, for the continent as a whole, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) plays an irreplaceable role, as it has done for several decades, but account must also be taken of the additional contribution to be made by subregional organizations as forums where African solidarity can be expressed. Subregional organizations have, of course, an economic role to play, but they have gradually come to expand their interests to include questions related to security and peacekeeping. In both areas, good cooperation with the United Nations is essential. It is based on respect for the provisions of the Charter and, particularly, the authority of the Security Council regarding the use of force.

From this standpoint, since its creation in 1983, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has developed very well. Early this year it set for itself the political objectives of peacekeeping and of establishing a community parliament and the subregional centre for human rights and democracy. With the creation of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, ECCAS has given itself a body that should allow it to satisfy its legitimate aspirations in the area of peacekeeping.

The European Union wishes to contribute in a practical way to strengthening ECCAS and its links with the United Nations. Several European States have already taken part in strengthening peacekeeping capabilities in the subregion. In February 2000 the multinational exercise called Gabon 2000 brought together 10 ECCAS countries. One of its main goals was to familiarize the States of the subregion with United Nations peacekeeping procedures to enable them to participate in peacekeeping operations or in multinational forces authorized by the Security Council. This is the kind of cooperation that should be encouraged in the future, as well as other partnerships to strengthen peacekeeping capability, democracy and sound public administration in the region. The European Union will lend its support to these efforts.

Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi (Gabon) *(spoke in French)*: I would like to state at the outset that the Gabonese delegation fully supports the statement made earlier by Mr. Santiago Nsobeya Efuman, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, on behalf of the member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

I am particularly pleased that the inclusion of agenda item 180, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States", coincides with the ECCAS restructuring process, as decided by the African leaders of our subregion at the Malabo summit on 24 June 1999.

As the representative of the ECCAS host country, I wish to take this opportunity to confirm Gabon's commitment to revitalizing this important subregional institution. Providing ECCAS once again with the means to function normally means offering it every opportunity to be the real motor for subregional integration and the primary tool for the establishment and consolidation of peace in Central Africa. The new momentum given to ECCAS is also designed to put an end to the contradiction of one of the potentially richest subregions of Africa being also the least stable. Too many armed conflicts, at times between founding members of our Community, continue to affect Central Africa. This deeply regrettable situation prevents ECCAS from fully contributing to the economic

recovery of the countries of our subregion and Africa in general.

In their efforts to strengthen peace in Central Africa, our heads of State or Government, in creating the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), wished to give ECCAS a new capacity for action in the areas of conflict prevention and management. The same concern led them to establish the early warning mechanism in Central Africa. Gabon, chosen by the other member States to host the headquarters of this instrument for prevention of armed conflict in Central Africa, has already taken steps to make available to ECCAS the building that will accommodate the early warning mechanism.

The draft resolution before us today reflects perfectly the firm will of our States to build a community of peaceful and prosperous States, inspired by the common ideal of working together for the well-being of their respective peoples. It is also in keeping with the vision inspired by the conclusions of the recent Millennium Summit.

The idea of establishing a subregional parliament and a centre for human rights and democracy respond to a concern that is an ongoing priority of our subregion. Indeed, since the late 1980s, the consultations held between our States, with the invaluable assistance of the United Nations, led in 1992 to the establishment of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/37 B of 6 December 1991. Since then the Standing Advisory Committee has been a very useful tool whose Secretariat has played a leading role in establishing confidence-building measures among the States of the subregion.

For example, in June 1996, it witnessed the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact between the States of Central Africa and organized important meetings, such as the one on small arms that took place in Chad in October 1999 and the one held recently in Burundi on refugees. The Committee's meetings have also provided a framework for reflection on the drafting and adoption of mechanisms such as the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, the early warning mechanism, the subregional parliament and the centre for human rights and democracy, which I referred to earlier.

However, we are convinced that in a world driven by the forces of globalization, the success and continuation of a subregional experiment in such sensitive areas as the consolidation of peace, the promotion of democratic values and institutions and human rights, the fight against illicit arms traffic or economic integration and development demand the sustained attention and support of the United Nations and the international community.

Convinced of this need, we have deemed it fitting to institutionalize the cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States. In this context, we would like to appeal not only to the traditional partners of the subregion, but also to this community of nations, to express firm support for the attainment of the goals set by ECCAS in the context of this draft resolution.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.6/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.6/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/55/L.6/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 55/22).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 180?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.59

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

59th plenary meeting
Monday, 13 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 32

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General
(A/55/492/Rev.1)

Draft resolution A/55/L.30

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.30.

Mr. Nejad-Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): In less than two months' time, in January 2001, a modest worldwide media campaign will begin in order to launch the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and bring the issue to the public. As stated in paragraph 6 of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/55/492/Rev.1, 12 television spots of 30 seconds each, dealing with the stories of 12 individuals whom the Secretary-General calls the unsung heroes of dialogue, because they "have reached across the 'divide' to the 'other'", will be offered to all television stations in the world for broadcasting as many times as possible during the year 2001.

Another public campaign involves the preparation of a book by a number of eminent persons, in cooperation with the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General. The eminent persons have accepted the invitation to reflect on issues such as ethnic cleansing, and concepts such as diversity and the common denominator of values, in the context of the United Nations; on diversity as the human face of globalization in today's world, which has never been more integrated, more vulnerable or more unequal; and on dialogue as a seed for a new paradigm of international relations. These are fundamental questions, and will require soul-searching reflections on the part of the authors. I would like to underscore the importance of this effort as a means of helping us all to develop a vision for the future and for the common destiny of humankind.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the leadership he has demonstrated and for his personal conviction about the potential of dialogue. I cannot not fail to express my gratitude to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, who is himself an effective practitioner of dialogue, for his faith in, and creative efforts to advance, dialogue among civilizations in both theory and practice.

My delegation looks forward to these promotional activities in the year 2001 on a dialogue among civilizations. In my view, these and other activities will provide a good start to the year 2001 in promoting the beginning of dialogue, but it will not end there. Dialogue is as expansive as we dare to imagine. It is expansive in terms of the interlocutors and in terms of

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00-74315 (E)

the subject. Of course, it is not an end in itself but represents a new approach — a qualitatively different mode of communication and discussion. I would therefore like to suggest that, in the year 2001, when we commemorate the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, we prepare ourselves to celebrate a new beginning, and not an end. We should prepare ourselves to lay a concrete foundation upon which we may be able to build our common humanity.

We are privileged to live in exciting times: the cold war is over and we are at the beginning of the third millennium. Our accumulated knowledge and human experience ought to point to a profound realization of our interdependence, common destiny and need to celebrate life in all its diversity and human dignity everywhere in the world.

It was perhaps in response to such a realization that the 191 world leaders, including 147 heads of State or Government, who took part in the Millennium Summit held from 6 to 8 September this year in New York, committed themselves, upon the creative suggestion of the Secretary-General, to halving, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same year, to providing clean drinking water and education for all, to reverse the spread of AIDS, make the right to development a reality for everyone and free the entire human race from want. The world leaders underscored freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility as fundamental values, essential to international relations in the twenty-first century.

These were not simple words, nor are they uttered frequently by large groups of world leaders. The goals will not easily be achieved. But, as the Secretary-General has acknowledged, the remarkable convergence of views among the world leaders on the challenges we face, and the urgency of their call to action, are striking. These undertakings by the world leaders are a source of hope for our common humanity in the twenty-first century.

We will rise to the challenge only if we revisit our approach to problem resolution. That is why, in our opinion, the call for a dialogue among civilizations has been welcomed across the world by both the public and private sectors. The objectives that our leaders set out to achieve are within reach when we dare to rise above short-term and narrow interests and take responsibility, as world citizens; when we dare not to fear our differences, and attempt to understand one another's concerns and aspirations; when we accord each other the respect, compassion, tolerance and dignity each human being across our shrinking world intrinsically deserves; when we truly avoid the tyranny of indifference and dare to genuinely care for our neighbours and fellow human beings — or, to put it simply, when we dare to have a dialogue at all levels and in all fields. This is our understanding of a dialogue among civilizations. Admittedly, dialogue is difficult, and we need to develop the requisite human skills for it.

President Khatami, who proposed the need for dialogue among civilizations, is the first to concede, as he did in his statement at the round table on dialogue among civilizations, which was held the day before the Millennium Summit, on 5 September, at the United Nations, that

> "dialogue is not easy. It is even more difficult to prepare and open up vistas upon one's inner existence to others."

However, recognizing that, despite its difficulty, there is no escaping "dialogue" if, as human beings, we are to secure the common destiny that befits us as rational beings, President Khatami hastened to point out that:

> "A belief in dialogue paves the way for vivacious hope: the hope of living in a world permeated by virtue, humanity and love, and not merely by the reign of economic indices and destructive weapons. Should the spirit of dialogue prevail, humanity, culture and civilization will prevail. We should all have faith in this triumph."

Allow me to express our gratitude to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and his staff for their efforts aimed at promoting the concept of dialogue among civilizations and for organizing the round table on the subject on 5 September, in which many heads of State, ministers, senior officials and eminent personalities participated. Each speaker contributed profoundly to our understanding of who we are, where we are heading, and the great potential of dialogue among civilizations to find answers to our common challenges.

The Secretary-General stressed that the United Nations, at its best, can be the true home of dialogue among civilizations — the forum where such a dialogue can flourish and bear fruit in every field of human endeavour. The Secretary-General has stated that if this dialogue does not take place every day, among all nations, within and between civilizations, cultures and groups, no peace can be lasting and no prosperity can be secure.

The President of the Republic of Namibia highlighted the need for dialogue in order for us to develop an appreciation of one another as human beings with diverse cultures, if we are to begin to understand one another's social and economic needs and viewpoints.

The President of Algeria saw great potential in dialogue as a tool for withstanding the onslaught of uniformity of a one-dimensional model stemming from materially rich countries, which tends to transform genuine and warm societies into what he called "schizophrenic societies".

The President of Indonesia elaborated on the absolute necessity for dialogue within civilizations. The President of the Republic of Nigeria expounded on the notion of why we need to rediscover the value of dialogue and return to the fundamental faith that life, all life, is sacred in our communities, our nations and, indeed, in the global community; to become our brothers' and sisters' keepers; and to care to share.

The President of Latvia defined dialogue as listening not just with an open mind but an open heart and an open spirit. The Emir of the State of Qatar emphasized the value of tolerance and diversity in today's world and underscored Qatar's support for, and participation in, dialogue at three levels: academic, media-related and governmental.

The President of Georgia rhetorically asked if we could not, after several millenniums of existence, avail ourselves of humankind's accumulated experience and make the universal dream of peaceful coexistence and the mutual complementarity of cultures finally come true.

The President of the Republic of Mali recognized dialogue among civilizations as one of the most fundamental which the United Nations has had in its brief history, but he did not hide his apprehension that it might suffer the same fate as several other initiatives of its kind — that is, to be forgotten after the initial fanfare. He considered that it would be a pity and highly detrimental if dialogue among civilizations served only as an outlet for the expression of profound anguish and concern but did not enable us to integrate social and cultural aspects into the forces of globalization, which is, to date, driven only by the logic of the market.

The President of Mozambique said that he regarded the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations as a vivid invitation to revive the debate on interaction among the peoples of the world as we strive to meet the challenge of bringing people together in a more just world that is free from conflict, poverty and hunger.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Culture of Costa Rica stressed the importance of recognizing that amid the magnificent diversity of cultures and forms of life, we are a single family with a common destiny. He pointed out the need for humankind to unite to create a sustainable global society based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace.

It was only fitting that the morning programme on 5 September should end with typical Indian wisdom. The Minister for External Affairs of India pointed out that the dialogue which, it is hoped, will bring together the advances of all civilizations will be judged by one touchstone — compassion. It will promote a reaffirmation of the human conscience and of universal fellowship, and ensure that care is provided to those whom material advances have left behind. He expressed trust that this dialogue among civilizations would promote a sense of indivisibility and of mutual belonging that would nurture the feeling that a community's or civilization's ascent cannot be complete until it is accompanied by the progress and advancement of the whole of humanity. The Minister warned that the maintenance and promotion of identities and the protection of cultural and civilizational traditions must not become a pretext for ultra-nationalism and exclusion.

I realize that I have not done justice to any of the statements made by the leaders who participated in the round table on dialogue among civilizations, but I have tried to convey that each and every one of them was important, profound and deserving of further study. They constitute a body of knowledge on dialogue

which can serve as a guiding light as we begin to ponder the prospect and potential of dialogue among civilizations.

I now have the distinct pleasure to introduce the draft resolution on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, contained in document A/55/L.30. The draft resolution before the Assembly is the result of a constructive process of consultation, and I wish to thank the many delegations that participated in the process and contributed to improving the text. I have the honour of noting that, in addition to the sponsors indicated in document A/55/L.30, 14 other States have indicated that they have decided to become sponsors of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution is longer than the one adopted last year for two obvious reasons: first, because a larger number of delegations contributed to its development and, secondly, that since this draft resolution, when adopted, would usher in the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, more ideas are introduced in it.

The fourth preambular paragraph is derived from a section of paragraph 6 of the Millennium Declaration regarding how tolerance is a fundamental value of international relations in the twenty-first century. The fifth preambular paragraph deals with interdependence and globalization, and the opportunity dialogue among civilizations provides to emphasize the cultural aspect of globalization. The eighth preambular paragraph is derived from paragraph 1 of article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and peoples' rights to self-determination, their freedom to determine their political status and their freedom to pursue their economic, social and cultural development. The tenth preambular paragraph emphasizes cooperation, partnership and inclusion as means of addressing global threats and challenges by seeking common grounds among and within civilizations.

Operative paragraph 3, like last year's resolution, invites all to further intensify their programmes to promote dialogue among civilizations. Operative paragraph 5 deals with educational curricula — the inclusion of programmes of study that would help enhance appreciation of cultural diversity. Operative paragraph 8 is intended to highlight the commemoration of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations in the penultimate week of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. It also seeks to allow for deliberation on and consideration of any follow-up measure or agreed final text. It also encourages participation at a high political level. The Secretary-General and his Personal Representative may wish to arrange for a presentation to the plenary Assembly by eminent persons or for the undertaking of other activities. Operative paragraph 9 calls attention to the Trust Fund on dialogue among civilizations and invites contributions to it so that continuity regarding this idea can be maintained on a voluntary basis. Operative paragraph 11 requests the Secretary-General to provide a substantive report about the activities during the Year and also about his vision for the future of dialogue among civilizations.

I trust that the draft will be adopted without a vote and hope that it will constitute a basis for a concerted effort to promote dialogue and expand the common values and principles of the family of humankind.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union.

As the Secretary-General indicated in his report on this item to the fifty-fourth General Assembly, in the absence of a universally recognized definition of the notion of civilization, the idea of a dialogue among civilizations can be interpreted in several ways. For its part, the European Union believes it preferable to understand dialogue among civilizations as a dialogue among cultures in the broadest sense of the term. Culture is both one of the most typical qualities and a basic aspect of human beings. The culture of a country or of a society is made up of a multitude of elements that reflect all aspects of human experience: geography, environment, language, history, science, the arts and beliefs, to give just a few examples. In the view of the European Union, any dialogue among civilizations to be undertaken must embrace all the elements that make up the wealth of cultures. To exclude some of these would be to impose an unfortunate limit on a dialogue that should be as rich as possible.

The plurality and diversity of cultures which the world displays to us every day are both a source of wealth for humanity and the foundation on which international relations are based. An inevitable corollary of the diversity of cultures is the differences in sensibilities between individuals or societies of

different cultures. History teaches us, unfortunately, that these differences can lead to mistrust, and that mistrust can in turn lead to hostility. For the European Union, the establishment of a dialogue among cultures requires the international community to shoulder the dual task of preserving cultural diversity while protecting against the risk of misunderstanding that such diversity can engender. In order for us to understand each other, it is important to create a favourable environment and have shared points of reference.

The undertaking of a dialogue — whether between individuals, societies or States — presupposes that the two parties accept and respect each other. One does not enter into dialogue with someone whom one does not recognize as an equal, notwithstanding the differences between the two. Similarly, the European Union believes that the recognition by States, of the values of tolerance and respect for the intrinsic dignity of human beings and of human rights, and the implementation of these values by the civil societies and individuals that make up States, contribute to the promotion of dialogue among cultures.

With regard to relations among States, the European Union believes that the founding of the United Nations was an essential milestone in the history of international relations. The United Nations is the first lasting international organization within which States are able to debate, on an equal footing, all questions relating directly or indirectly to the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The European Union considers that the strengthening of the role and means of action of the United Nations and the agencies of the United Nations system is a fundamental way of promoting a dialogue among cultures.

The United Nations Charter, in proclaiming the dignity and worth of the individual, the equal rights of men and women and of nations and the undertaking of Member States to practise tolerance has established the principles within which dialogue must take place. Within the United Nations system, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), because of its specific competencies in the area of education and culture, has a particular role to play in the development of a dialogue among cultures. In this respect, the European Union welcomes UNESCO's designation as the main body for the implementation of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We welcome the drafts prepared by that organization with a view to making a reality of the concept of the dialogue among civilizations.

Dialogue among civilizations, however, cannot simply be limited to inter-State relations. It implies that we must promote among individuals, whatever their creed, a curiosity about other cultures. In this way we can develop direct exchanges between individuals and groups of people that have common linguistic, artistic, scientific, spiritual and human interests. The development and deepening of the dialogue among these interlocutors presupposes an active role for individuals themselves, institutions that represent civil society, non-governmental organizations and international organizations.

The European Union considers that the development of the activities of these various players is a way in which we can step up exchanges and encounters among people from different cultures. We call upon Member States to facilitate this development in every way that they can.

Over and above the traditional institutional framework for international relations, globalization and the fast development of new information and communications technologies give us new and extraordinary opportunities for expression and exchange. Today we are seeing only the beginnings of these developments. The European Union welcomes these developments, which place the individual again at the heart of the process of the communication of knowledge and gives the individual an unprecedented capacity to take the initiative. The European Union calls upon Member States to mobilize and contribute to the development of new information and communications technology and to enable all human beings to have access to it.

The existence of a dialogue among civilizations requires one last condition that must urgently be met: the preservation of plurality and diversity of cultures in all their dimensions. As the Secretary-General points out in the report before us, diversity goes hand in hand with universality and underlies all thinking on the dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The European Union realizes that globalization, with all its rich potential, nevertheless carries the risk of making behaviour, cultural codes and means of

communication uniform. What is more, the risk of marginalizing or even causing the disappearance of minority forms of culture is often exacerbated by economic disparities and imbalances in levels of access to modern media, particularly the new forms of information and communications technology.

The European Union believes, as does the Secretary-General, that diversity represents the human face of globalization. It hopes that Member States will give themselves the long-term objective of preserving cultural diversity while also respecting universal values. The Union considers that we should think about the ways in which we can bring this about. We welcome the setting up on 5 September 2000 of an Eminent Persons Group, invited by the Secretary-General to lead consultations on the dialogue among civilizations and to prepare a report on this subject. The first meeting of this Group will be held from 13 to 15 December of this year in Vienna.

The history of international relations has, unfortunately, given us many more examples of confrontation than of dialogue. The European Union is very happy to see that, in declaring 2001 the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the United Nations has set itself the goal of creating a new paradigm for relations among countries and cultures.

Mr. Vantsevich (Belarus) *(spoke in Russian)*: The delegation of the Republic of Belarus welcomes the discussion on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It is not by chance that at the threshold of the twenty-first century we are reaching a general understanding of the special importance of a dialogue among nations, cultures and civilizations. We all witnessed a manifestation of this during the gathering of heads of State that took place in September 2000 at United Nations Headquarters. We particularly welcome the role that is being played by the Iranian delegation and, personally, by President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in pursuing this noble goal.

An important step was the holding of the Millennium Summit and the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, in which heads of State or Government of Member States of the United Nations assumed responsibility for the preservation of peace, especially through dialogue. The Millennium Summit became the highest manifestation of the concept of dialogue among civilizations. Belarus is fully committed to the obligations of the Declaration and intends to undertake every effort for its fulfilment.

The concept of the diversity of the modern world is firmly interwoven with that of globalization. We fully share the opinion expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the need to continue to reflect on this interdependence and on all its advantages and disadvantages, for the United Nations and for mankind as a whole. How can we compel diversity to be a factor for unity, rather than one for division? This issue will remain on our agenda throughout this century. It must be pointed out that the image of the United Nations in the world community as a whole will greatly depend on its resolution.

The theoretical discussions on the problem of dialogue among civilizations should be tied to practical measures. The year ahead, which the United Nations will devote to this topic, will provide a unique opportunity to mobilize the United Nations potential to take concrete steps to demonstrate the advantage of the strength of dialogue over the philosophies of enmity, intolerance, xenophobia and ethnic conflict. Belarus is ready to participate in this work and will encourage its progress in every possible way.

Mr. Malhotra (India): At the outset, I would like thank Ambassador Hadi Nejad Hosseinian, Permanent Representative of Iran, for introducing the draft resolution before us and for the efforts undertaken by Iran in pursuing this theme over the past two years.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his succinct report, which poses pertinent questions before us, particularly his observation that

> "It is the perception of diversity as a threat that has made so many overlook the common humanity that unites us all." *(A/55/492/Rev.1, para. 4)*

As I have already made a more extensive statement on the theme of dialogue among civilizations in the opening debate in 1998, I will restrict myself to a few observations stemming from the above observation.

It has been observed earlier that diversity is the foundation of this house of the United Nations. This is a truth that we should grasp and imbibe, internalize in our thought and action and hold on to as if our joined destiny depended upon it. Seeking a unity of collective human purpose and belonging and celebrating this vast

and rich mosaic of civilizational variety, which is the essence of the nations united, enhances both the common bond as well as the variegated splendour of the highest attainments of our shared humanity. Our aspiration at the turn of the millennium should be to erase the sense of separation and to cherish our marvellous variety as a common inheritance, which nourishes us all and deepens and enriches our consciousness and sense of ourselves. It should expand our sense of belonging so that another peoples' pain is felt by us as our own and so that the deprivation and indignity of poverty in the lives of any part of the human family are felt as insupportable for ourselves. It should make us eager to reap the rewards of the human insights and the highest accomplishments in the life of the spirit, thought, literature and art of any group of the global community. A globalization of the spirit and of human fellowship, resting on the bedrock of variety, must accompany the homogenizing globalization of our economic and technocratic life.

We largely share the broad contours of the conceptual terrain outlined in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report. However, while elaborating on the indignities, we feel our vision should not be constricted, lest we miss the broader picture of the experience of all the world's societies and communities. Media prominence should certainly not be our guide to what demands scrutiny. The story of the enslavement, disempowerment and subjugation in all respects of what have now been converted into developing societies holds a grave lesson, instruction and a call for a healing commitment and responsibility.

We would caution against any misinterpretation of the dialogue among civilizations as signifying a dialogue among religions. The Indic civilization, from time immemorial, has been characterized by inclusiveness, and not exclusiveness, of spiritual experience. Conceiving of the world as one family, or *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, has been a guiding inspiration. It is also the experience of other cultures that the idea of civilization transcends religious affinities. This perspective is even more central to a dialogue among civilizations, for we need to throw bridges over which a vast traffic of understanding will flow from all sides and consolidate a sense of unity transcending division. Respect for all religious, linguistic and cultural manifestations has been the core of Indian civilizational values. The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization aptly observed recently:

> "'Civilization' and 'religion', to be sure, are not synonymous terms ... Cultures have not necessarily identified themselves with any one single creed".

While promoting the dialogue among civilizations, we need to be clear on this distinction.

We have also metaphorically visualized the dialogue among civilizations as a confluence of great streams, some ancient and therefore running deep, others young and ebullient with the vitality of invention. We should drink from all these life-giving waters and draw sustenance and strength. This flow is without end. We wonder, therefore, at the usefulness of starting to think of initiatives of the type envisaged in the report to give a so-called "fitting conclusion" to the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations through a "specific diplomatic initiative". We feel that our endeavour should rather be to launch the dialogue in its widest sense during the Year so that we may continue to reap the benefit of the sense of solidarity and common purpose in a shared endeavour, which would inform all forms of collaboration among us.

Over the past half-century, the United Nations has served as a host to all nations, promoting reconciliation and a culture of dialogue among them. The search for common moral and ethical values has led to the codification of a range of international instruments concerning tolerance, human rights, cultural cooperation and cooperation in science and technology. The values of democracy, human rights, pluralism and respect for rule of law, all civilizational influences, have acquired almost universal validity. Dialogue among and within nations and civilizations can and must promote understanding, pluralism and diversity as essential components of progress and human advancement.

The central question that we have to grapple with is how to forge societies that are truly liberal and multicultural, but which retain a sense of unity and a corpus of common values; how they can best contribute to the emergence of a truly shared and liberal "human civilization"; and how the dialogue among civilizations can deal effectively with the menaces that afflict and threaten to drown our civilizational heritage, such as poverty and underdevelopment, hunger and disease, the

emergence of xenophobia, racism, extremism, terrorism and actions of the "uncivil society".

Unprecedented advances in science and technology hold out the promise of great material progress and development. Breakthroughs in information technology are creating a new direct cultural interface across the people of the world and offer a unique possibility of intensifying productive exchanges in diverse fields. Science and technology also provide valuable tools for historic preservation, documentation and wide dissemination of the cultural heritage of all civilizations. We agree with the Secretary-General that the promotion of identity and cultural diversity could, in itself, become the very substance of dialogue among civilizations. Instead of viewing diversity as a threat, we should, as stated so eloquently by our heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration, respect one another, in all our diversity of belief, culture and language, promoting an active culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations. The parameters of this dialogue should move away from the traditional but limited approach of better knowledge of each other and understanding of our peculiarities to a greater appreciation of diversity as a variation on the theme of humanity and its unlimited potential and the enlarging of a common denominator of values and principles on which our shared humanity rests.

We commend the Secretary-General for pointing out that

> "Our world has never been more integrated, more vulnerable and more unequal". (*A/55/492/Rev.1, para. 5*)

We live through these ironies and dilemmas. A dialogue among civilizations, which hopefully will unite the advances of all civilizations, will succeed if it fosters the universal urge in our hearts for justice and equality, conscience and compassion, harmony and coherence. It must promote a sense of indivisible mutual belonging and the conviction that all, without distinction, must participate in the advancement of human civilization. We observe that the draft resolution rightly notes that civilizations are not confined to nation-States, but, rather, encompass different cultures. Nor should maintenance and promotion of identities and protection of cultural and civilizational traditions ever become a tool to shield ultranationalism and exclusionism. Exceptionalism and exclusivism are the roots of a clash of civilizations; they cannot advance a dialogue among civilizations.

A year ago my colleague, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, said:

> "dialogue should be built on the combined efforts of all States and peoples in combating violence, extremism, terrorism, poverty, famine and disease, that is, all those disasters which deny the very essence, the basis, of any civilization." (*A/54/PV.77, p. 23*)

Instead of viewing the dialogue through the prism of divisiveness, we must ensure that it promotes and consolidates the principles of pluralism and democracy, acceptance of diversity and mutual respect, freedom and equality, solidarity and a sense of shared responsibility. The dialogue must bring out the uniting features of our civilizations, all of which have contributed to the human saga, while preserving those distinctive features of a civilization which give it a distinctive genius and adds to the totality of human richness. India will contribute, in thought and in action, to this endeavour.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The question that we are considering today is of particular importance, given its link to the future of relations between the civilizations of today. It is an attempt to understand the beliefs and the outlooks of others. That is essential and is an important basis for international relations and for a dialogue among civilizations. We cannot, in fact, deal successfully with a matter of international, regional or local importance unless we understand the cultural perceptions and contexts of civilizations that govern the actions of those included in these civilizations. Dialogue among civilizations is a huge area and aims at bringing together all peoples of the world and civilizations so that we can understand the conditions of the others, their perceptions and their visions.

The dialogue that we are aspiring to today is an open dialogue among civilizations without exception; a dialogue based on the attempt to understand the other persons and their concerns, interests and objectives; a dialogue that does not attempt to polarize, but attempts to convince people to live together peacefully; a dialogue far removed from intolerance, racism and the exclusion of others or the attempt to interfere in their domestic affairs, a dialogue that does not neglect cultural and civilizational differences between the

parties, but understands at the same time the overall context, common origin and common destiny that we all share; a dialogue that is not limited to philosophies and analyses of history, but is directed towards the future and tries to understand in greater depth the common roots of humanity; an approach that attempts to promote tolerance and understanding and rejection of aggression, violence and any attempt to impose one's will on others.

Perhaps our point of departure towards a fruitful dialogue among civilizations should be an attempt to agree first of all on a number of basic concepts that define the general framework for dialogue. Of these, I would mention first and foremost agreement that the framework for civilization far exceeds the limited framework of culture. While culture is limited to unity of religion, traditions and language, civilization is like a river comprising much broader concepts, given the longer history behind it. With regard to the geographical framework, it is unlimited — it goes wherever civilizations go and wherever traditions, religions and languages go. They join civilization and enrich that civilization.

Secondly, the need to remove from this dialogue the burdens of the past and the historical heritage, which includes bitter experiences and hatred, and the need to move forward with an open heart and mind.

Thirdly, the need for us to agree on the objective that we hope to attain from the dialogue among civilizations. After all, it is an attempt to understand each other, to explain ourselves to the other, to bring about coexistence between civilizations and to remove any cause of conflict and confrontation between them.

Fourthly, the need to stop pointing fingers at others and condemning their ideas or slighting their beliefs or trying to impose on them what we think is correct.

During the debate on this important issue last year, we reaffirmed our point of view and stressed the fact that we cannot imagine that civilizations or the societies that represent them are more important than others or that our situation and our historic conditions at this point in time give any country the right to feel superior to others or to dictate to others what they should or should not do.

It is categorically wrong to think that military capacity or organizational capacity in terms of economy or science could enable anyone to impose their way of life on others.

The opposite however is true because we are sure that any attempt to impose someone else's will on someone will lead to resistance and, in the end, to defeat.

The group of major civilizations that we see on the world stage today — and this world stage is very limited, even though it is very extensive — have specific characteristics and concepts, but by their very nature are in constant evolution and are always able to assimilate others and to react, but without coercion or pressure.

The experience of thousands of years and the experience of civilizations, empires and great Powers throughout our rich history has taught us that oppression will always meet with resistance and that challenges are successfully met whether over time or in terms of space.

The world of today — and I think we all agree — has gone beyond the limits known to humanity throughout its history. This has been most noticeable over the last two centuries and especially now with regard to a phenomenon that will forever be with us, namely globalization.

Globalization, with all its manifestations and concepts, whether positive or negative, imposes upon civilizations and various communities in an unprecedented way, a number of sources of friction, particularly when these civilizations come into contact with each other. It is undoubtedly this friction — which we should not call conflict or confrontation — that requires us to act cautiously and to attempt to establish moral and legal bases that guarantee peaceful coexistence and that exclude any recourse to violence and any wrong vision of supremacy and domination on the part of one vis-à-vis others.

The international community, with all its States and civilizations, be they big or small, strong or not so strong, rich or poor, whilst reaffirming that wealth and poverty are not limited to purely material aspects, reflects all aspects of civilization through various layers of culture and the ability to develop towards a world of peace, security, stability and prosperity. I affirm that the international community today, more than ever before, should adhere to the original concepts of humanity, namely, peace, peaceful coexistence,

recognition of difference and diversity and the impossibility of insisting on a single path for humanity in its development without confrontation. If we can do this, we will have enabled civilizations and humanity and States to develop in a positive way that will protect them from injustice and danger.

We have one final point that we would like to develop and examine: the need for everyone to agree on the right of self-determination for all peoples without double standards. In all respects, the occupation by one people or one State of another people or of the territory of another community is an aggression that must not be tolerated in the twenty-first century. Taking the land of others and settling on that land must not be permitted in the twenty-first century. The imposition of an embargo by one State on another people is an unforgivable crime. If humanity is able to reach agreement that everybody should be treated in the same way according to the same criteria, then we will be much closer to achieving this noble objective that we have set ourselves, namely, a constructive and positive dialogue among civilizations, a dialogue that will enable this huge Organization, the United Nations and all its bodies and agencies, to achieve these noble objectives in the fight against poverty, to eliminate disease, to bring about assistance for economic development, to guarantee global criteria for human rights and to safeguard the economic prosperity of communities as well many other objectives that we have been discussing and that we will always promote.

Egypt has participated effectively at three General Assembly sessions in the special debate on the dialogue among civilizations and in the adoption of two resolutions on this subject. The Egyptian delegation also played an active role in drafting and adopting the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly today. It hopes that 2001 will truly be a year of dialogue among civilizations — all civilizations, without exception. While reaffirming that we intend to participate actively in sessions of the General Assembly related to this question next December, we invite the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution without a vote in order to underscore international unanimity with regard to achieving a dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUUAM) group. On its behalf I wish to express our gratitude to the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the useful and valuable idea of a dialogue among civilizations, put forward by President Khatami. A General Assembly debate on this item is an important additional factor, confirming the significance of this Organization's work in the twenty-first century. The General Assembly's declaration of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations has been an important step in turning this initiative into an ongoing process that will inspire our joint efforts to achieve sustainable development and strengthen peace and security on earth. The spirit of dialogue will help clear the way for harmony and coexistence, free of violence, hatred, poverty and war.

At the dawn of the new millennium, mankind is facing new problems and challenges, and new paradigms are emerging in international relations. It is becoming apparent that yesterday's bipolar world is past and that it is gradually being replaced by a multifaceted world that demands entirely new approaches aimed at unified coexistence among various cultures and civilizations. The current historic period has two directions: on the one hand, global integration, and, on the other hand, the preservation of diversity and the integrity of all nations.

The events of recent years show that diversity is frequently used as a justification for modern conflicts that are represented as confrontations between cultures, religions and ethnic groups. However, we fully share the view of Mr. Picco, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, that many conflicts have been caused merely by the perception that diversity is a threat, whereas diversity is the fundamental value upon which our Organization was based and a source of inspiration and progress for mankind as a whole. The more we value diversity and integrity, the stronger will be the values that bring us all together. The principles of respect, tolerance, constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation among civilizations should form the basis of international relations, since, regardless of our different ways of achieving them, we are guided by common goals and values, as laid out in the Charter.

The need for dialogue has become even more pressing in the context of the ongoing and rapidly developing globalization process, one of the determining factors in mankind's current stage of development. The newest techniques in communication technology, the newest achievements in transportation,

communication and the Internet, are not only promoting dialogue, but are making it absolutely vital. Only through this kind of approach will mankind be able to use the globalization process for further economic, spiritual and cultural development.

Each of the countries on whose behalf I have the honour to speak has an ancient history, culture and civilization. People of differing nationalities, religion and culture reside in every country, and we are convinced that that diversity is the source of strength and a catalyst for the social development of our States. Our Governments are making every possible effort to create democratic States in which diversity and unity bring all social strata together on the basis of the principles of tolerance, solidarity and mutual respect. Civilizations are in one way or another interlinked.

Throughout the centuries the GUUAM States have served as a bridge between the East and the West, linked by the Great Silk Road, which passes through our countries' territories, enriching our cultures and bringing to them the ideas of diversity, tolerance and mutual cooperation. Given this invaluable legacy, the GUUAM States are making collective efforts to restore the Great Silk Road. They are focusing great attention on the question of a dialogue among civilizations. One of the most important forums in which this was discussed was the fifth general session of the Helsinki Civilian Assembly, which was held in October in the capital of Azerbaijan, Baku, with the participation of more than 500 representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations from throughout the world.

There is no doubt that one of the inherent components of a dialogue between civilizations is the need to establish a dialogue between religions. The GUUAM States encourage dialogue among all religions. One example is the International Inter-religious Political Forum held in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, from 2 to 5 November 1999, on religion and democracy. Its participants confirmed the idea that the globalization process cannot ignore any aspect of human life, including the spiritual. An ongoing dialogue should be based on mutual respect and the loftiest humanitarian values.

The results of the Millennium Peace Summit, which was held in this Hall and in which religious leaders participated, reaffirmed at the global level the need for dialogue to use the strength of religious belief and tolerance to mobilize efforts to overcome the barriers that divide nations. The GUUAM States welcomed the round-table meeting on dialogue among civilizations organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and hopes that another such meeting will be held in the context of the United Nations-Iran dialogue among civilizations in one of the GUUAM States. This initiative should be supported, as put forward by the President of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from the Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit, in which heads of State and Government reaffirmed that tolerance is a basic value of fundamental importance to international relations in the twenty-first century, as follows:

> "Human beings must respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted." (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 6*)

The GUUAM States are open to such a dialogue and intend to make their own active contribution to it.

We hope that the Governments of all States and political and spiritual leaders will make every effort to fulfil these social and cultural programmes to bring about a dialogue among civilizations and cultures.

Mr. Moura (Brazil): The various conferences and seminars held in recent months on the dialogue among civilizations have illustrated the worldwide support for the General Assembly's decision to proclaim the year 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Such a debate is timely and relevant as we enter the new millennium and as our world grows more integrated.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report. We also appreciate the important work coordinated by Mr. Giandomenico Picco, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its efforts in promoting the dialogue. We also commend the many activities being carried out, among them the substantive debate on this initiative that brought together scholars, high officials and heads of State last

September in New York. We are confident that the analytical work being pursued by the Eminent Persons Group, which includes Ms. Ruth Cardoso of Brazil, will make a valuable contribution to our deliberations.

We Brazilians are proud to be part of a society that has been enriched by cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Our history is an example of a constant dialogue among civilizations. Before the arrival of the first Portuguese settlers, the many scores of indigenous groups were entwined in a permanent cultural interchange that made possible such an interesting phenomenon as the diffusion across most of the current territory of Brazil of a language known as the *lingua geral*, which was commonly understood by most tribes.

Miscegenation has been a pattern of our socio-economic development. Brazil is the cradle of the second-largest population of African origin in the world. The racial and cultural blend that resulted from colonization and from successive waves of immigration is a truly outstanding phenomenon that has brought together in my country millions of citizens of Arab, European and Asian descent. Seen from a historical perspective, this dialogue among cultures and races has not prevented the consolidation of an autonomous identity or the expression of dissent. In Brazil this can be said of religions and beliefs, political opinions and cultural traits. But this complex evolution has also been translated into the formation of a clear nationality and a common identity for all Brazilians.

While highlighting these features of Brazilian society, we wish at the same time to touch upon some of the core values underlying the initiative to carry out a dialogue among civilizations. Those values have to do with a unity built from, and constituted by, human and cultural diversity.

It is fitting that the dialogue among civilizations is taking place under the auspices of the United Nations. The fundamental purposes and principles of the Organization are intimately associated with the idea of dialogue. Peace cannot be obtained without it. Equality and respect for the dignity of the human person are concepts that derive from the recognition of the "other", a necessary condition for dialogue. Furthermore, all parties to a dialogue must stand on an equal footing.

The Organization embodies the common ideals and endeavours of the international community. In a time marked by an unprecedented increase in trade and communications, by a technological revolution and by the acceleration of information, it is only natural that the United Nations engage in an effort to identify and discuss the common moral, ethical and philosophical bedrock upon which mankind, in its diversity, has endeavoured to search for peace, security, justice and prosperity for all. This understanding, which constitutes one of the aims of the dialogue among civilizations, can be achieved only in an environment in which all cultures, religions and civilizations are treated on equal terms.

It is important to remember, however, that such an environment exists because the international community has concluded that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and must be valued and respected as the highest principles governing all actors of the international community, be they individual or collective. A genuine dialogue among people of diverse cultures, religions and visions of the world will take place and achieve fruitful results only when these fundamental values are upheld; otherwise it will not be possible to understand our differences and to be enriched by this understanding.

We are confident that the dialogue among civilizations will foster international cooperation and contribute to the consolidation of democratic standards. I would like to take this opportunity to underscore Brazil's firm commitment to the strengthening of multilateral institutions — particularly the United Nations — and my Government's unswerving willingness to collaborate in all efforts aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the United Nations, in particular those set forth in the numerous human rights instruments to which we have subscribed.

We are confident that during the dialogue we will hear the voice of the dispossessed, that silent majority of mankind suffering from lack of food, housing, health and education — a constituency that, unfortunately, has not ceased to increase despite the acceleration of capital accumulation. In the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, during which the third United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance will take place in South Africa, a country that defeated the heinous regime of apartheid, we trust that tolerance and respect for diversity will help in the relentless struggle to eliminate the scourge of racism.

In conclusion, we hope that in the coming year we shall be able, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his report, to identify practical steps to counter the misconception that equates diversity with enmity. In this context, it is important to fulfil the notion of dialogue in its broadest etymological meaning by establishing a debate aimed at *logos*, or knowledge and harmony derived from logic. While reaffirming humanity's common set of goals and principles, we shall further advance towards the consolidation of the human family.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): In recent times, the world has seen the end of the cold war and of bipolar division. Today's is a new world order dominated by a single super-Power and by the globalization of markets, finance, communications and culture. The second half of the twentieth century was marked by great, and astonishing, changes in all areas of science and of learning. At the same time, negative features have given rise to concern. At a very rapid pace, science and technology have developed, wealth has grown and communications have progressed; but the gap between the rich countries of the North and the poor countries of the South is widening. The countries of the South are plagued by disease; there too the gap is widening. A minority monopolizes the world's wealth, and regional and local wars have broken out as a result; we have also seen the spread of terror, violence and hegemony, along with damage to the environment.

Those are the kinds of contradictions that we can see in today's world. Those contradictions interact among themselves, and pose a threat to international peace and security. They steer mankind into a lack of credibility and conflicts of interest, and into the abandonment of values and of cooperation. Now more than ever, we must ensure human security on the basis of sustainable development and constructive cooperation and on exchanges of interests and a deepening of understanding among peoples through a dialogue among civilizations aimed at reaching mankind's objective of a secure, prosperous future.

The President returned to the Chair.

Humanity is not composed of multiple civilizations. Throughout history, there has been only one civilization: human civilization, whatever it may be at any given time. In fact, civilization consists of reactions and continuous flows among cultures over the ages. This dialogue is thus a dialogue among cultures, which are numerous, and to which human beings cling in order to protect their identity. Civilization is the result, inter alia, of political and economic policies, of education and of social conduct. But civilization cannot come about without a culture behind it, and without moral values relating to faith.

Thus, civilization is more than the means of production, technological development and social services; it is also the values, convictions, ideas and concepts that govern society. Civilization must be diverse and must recognize the differences among peoples and among cultural perceptions.

Some feel that globalization is a philosophy that seeks to impose on the world, with its multiplicity of cultures and identities, a single ideology and to force it into a single framework in order to disseminate the idea of creating one world with one civilization, dominated by the information and communications revolution and by information technology: the concept of the global village. But people cannot accept that concept of globalization, which certain countries are inviting us to embrace: all people cannot assimilate a single culture, however global it may be, because every country has the legitimate right to affirm its own cultural identity and to develop its capacities within a framework of values, principles and outlooks. Every civilization is based on a number of moral values that determine the lifestyle of its members. Civilizations gain strength from creativity. Every civilization reflects this in its history books, through the creativity of its intellectuals.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was favoured by the Almighty with Mecca, the seat of illumination for mankind, and by the invitation with which we were honoured, to follow the faith of Islam, a faith of cooperation and peace among peoples. We are deeply convinced of the validity of a dialogue among civilizations, on the basis of the Koran, which says: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, not that ye may despise each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you." (*The Holy Koran, 49:13*)

We are called upon to cooperate with all those who believe in God; the Prophet calls upon us to seek knowledge even if the search leads us to China, and to

seek knowledge from birth to death, on the basis of our common destiny and on the equality of all human beings, whatever their language, colour, ethnic origin or cultural or ideological affiliation.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is convinced of the need to establish a constructive dialogue that will result in prosperity for all mankind and that will enrich culture and intellectual development. That culture would be based on logic and on credible principles founded on the precepts of Islam.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomed resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998, by which the Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We reject theories holding that conflict among civilizations is inevitable and is a scientific fact. Past and present conflicts have always had political and economic domination and territorial expansion for their objectives. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considers such ideologies a threat to the safety, security and stability of peoples. Moreover, the Kingdom rejects any attempt by one civilization to dominate another, as this would constitute a dangerous violation of the principles of justice, tolerance and cooperation, and would lay the foundations of injustice and oppression.

Cultural diversity among human beings blazes an efficient and effective path to prosperity. Every people has the right to defend its distinct cultural identity and its particular characteristics. World peace and peaceful coexistence must encompass all cultures, so that they can make their cultural contribution to a prosperous future for mankind.

The dialogue among civilizations is the only way to achieve cooperation so as to bring about a new world order based on common moral values, guaranteeing a better future for humanity through peace, security, stability, solidarity and development in a framework of human cooperation and respect for the multiplicity of peoples and cultures, thereby enriching Islamic civilization and humanity at large.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Although the concept of a dialogue among civilizations emerged a long time ago, paradoxically it owes its new incarnation as much to the stimulus provided by the Iranian President, who proposed 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, as to the dire prediction of a catastrophic clash between civilizations made by an oracle who was clearly ill-inspired.

The dialogue among civilizations is now a concept that is widely recognized, accepted and celebrated — a fact that can only be welcomed by all of us in this house of glass who advocate dialogue and work towards a culture of peace.

In these troubled and uncertain times, when humanity is asking itself questions about its future and facing up to new kinds of challenges that confront it collectively, dialogue is more important than ever in keeping us from the mistakes of the past and enabling us to enter the new millennium with an unshakeable faith in the ability of humankind to rise above adversity.

The history of humanity in the past century, however, was characterized more by confrontation than by dialogue. Just a few years ago, the very existence of the world was threatened by nuclear holocaust, which would have annihilated the whole of humanity, and we were spared only through the strict observance of a fragile and absurd balance of terror. The end of the cold war, which coincided with the end of the millennium and the announcement by the nuclear Powers that they would undertake to completely eliminate their nuclear weapons, seems to have exorcised the demons of destruction that threatened the world with total annihilation.

The cold war, however, was only one of the many episodes that plunged the world into mourning and brought about death and desolation. Large-scale confrontation, which often arises from religious, ethnic and racial intolerance, has also been fed by economic aspirations, the search for living space and the conquest of new colonial empires, which in turn gives rise to further confrontations legitimately based on the aspirations of peoples to freedom and independence. Such confrontation will continue until the causes disappear — that is, until there is true solidarity between peoples and we are convinced of the need to accept diversity and to respect each other despite our differences.

Given its geographic location, my country has always been at the crossroads of major civilizations. Situated at the point where Africa and Europe meet — the junction between the Arab-Islamic civilization and the western world — and, having much in common the peoples of the Mediterranean, Algeria has been a part

of some of the most prestigious civilizations, whose influence has spread throughout the region to which we belong, providing us with the opportunity to make a generous contribution to their development and to benefit from their vitality.

Algeria is an ancient nation whose roots extend through a rich and glorious prehistory, as shown by the frescoes and rock drawings of Tassili, which depict the way of life of the first men and women who populated our country thousands of years ago. Very early in its history, therefore, Algeria was able to interact — sometimes harshly, but often amiably — with the major civilizations of the Mediterranean basin, in particular the Greek, Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Arab-Islamic and sub-Saharan African civilizations and, eventually, with that of the modern western world.

The collective memory of the Algerian people and its heritage overflows with evidence of this interaction with the rest of the world. Numerous aspects of the daily life of our peoples within this sphere of interaction are a constant reminder of the contribution of the sons and daughters of Algeria to the economic, social and cultural development of these peoples. This evidence is to be found in legacies as varied as our culture, social life, language, architecture and culinary arts.

Proud of its Berber past, with its prosperous kingdoms and struggles for independence, Algeria fully takes its modern-day place within the Arab-Muslim civilization, with the satisfaction of knowing that we have made a significant contribution to the expansion of this civilization that has carried the torch of knowledge to distant lands. The Algerian people are tolerant, generous and open to renewal, and today we are undertaking the ambitious task of making our country, which has been damaged by a tragic period of violence, a good example of peaceful and harmonious coexistence, and to bring together, in solidarity and unity, all of our constituent parts within one nation, held together by a common destiny and the shared aspirations for a better future.

Algeria participated actively in the round table organized on 5 September by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on dialogue among civilizations. In his statement in that discussion, the President of Algeria welcomed the initiative of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to proclaim 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This initiative is very timely, having come at a moment when we are considering the possibility of undertaking a fruitful and balanced dialogue among civilizations that are at different developmental stages — unequal stages, especially in the simplistic context of globalization. Countries that are poor in terms of resources, but often rich in culture, might justly fear that certain ethical and social values that they hold very dear might be eroded or even destroyed by the universal application of a one-dimensional model originating in countries that are materially prosperous.

Today, in a world of constant political, economic and socio-cultural flux characterized by unprecedented scientific and technological development, especially in the areas of information and communication, and by an irreversible globalization affecting every sphere of human activity, dialogue between civilizations — all civilizations — may provide an essential means of dealing with the many factors of confrontation and war. By embracing such a dialogue, the world will be opening the way to the emergence of a genuine culture of peace and understanding between nations, of respect for the right of peoples to self-determination and to choose their own lifestyle, thereby making possible the abolition of all forms of racism, intolerance and discrimination — that is to say, a culture of effective respect for human rights and the rights of peoples.

In order to achieve this objective, what better forum than the United Nations — this universal arena that brings together all of the nations of the world, large and small, rich and developing, in active partnership with the new actors on the international stage: the members of civil society, notably the non-governmental organizations, the press and the media. All of these actors are today called upon to play their role in the promotion of a genuine dialogue between civilizations, which should lead to the establishment of a set of underlying common values — the foundation of a true universal civilization. This should be done without denying the existence of particular aspects of other civilizations. In this way the diversity and the richness of our human heritage will be recognized, as will the need to build a new world of understanding and acceptance.

Against this background, Algeria encourages the United Nations and its various agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in particular, to undertake all

actions and initiatives that might contribute to the promotion of a dialogue between civilizations. It goes without saying, however, that devoting the year 2001 to this purpose does not imply that the objective of dialogue among civilizations will then either have been achieved or be obsolete. On the contrary, it must continue to prevail as a source of inspiration and reference in all our thoughts on how to promote a culture of peace in the world and encourage tolerance and coexistence between all peoples.

Mr. Ahmad (Malaysia): Throughout human history, despite the obstacles of intolerance and aggression, there has been constructive interaction among civilizations, bringing about development and progress for mankind. While nation-States belong to particular cultural or civilizational domains, cultures and civilizations are not confined to individual nation-States. The achievements of civilizations constitute a common heritage of humanity, which provides the basis for the progress and well-being of mankind. Indeed, the very existence of the United Nations is premised on, and the product of, this dialogue and cooperation among the various peoples and nations of the world.

The unity of the human spirit is underlined in the various religions and cultures of the world. It provides a solid foundation for dialogue and understanding among peoples with diverging views and traditions. The strengthening of mutually friendly relations and recognition among peoples of the world would help to promote peace and expand social, cultural and economic cooperation in international relations.

Respect for cultural diversity and civilizational specificities have become recognized means of advancing creative human inspiration. Different cultures and civilizations provide a rich source of knowledge and wisdom for addressing comprehensively common material and spiritual challenges through faith and human values. Liberty, justice, solidarity and morality are indispensable in the global endeavour to promote human development, peace, mutual security and friendly relations among peoples.

Dialogue is an imperative necessity for coexistence and international cooperation, and it is an essential process if we wish to avoid domination, aggression and other manifestations of human conflict. The future of humanity is contingent upon faith in, and compliance with, the aforementioned values, coupled with sincere efforts to build upon the achievements of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in promoting peace and human development.

My delegation is sad to note that despite the ideals that this body is promoting and doing its best to effect, feelings of distrust and animosity still prevail. A few weeks back, a film was shown on the premises of the United Nations focusing on the unjustified killing of women in the name of "honour". While we are not questioning the motivation behind the making of the film, it is most unfortunate that it conveyed the impression that Islam condones so-called honour killings. This negative stereotyping of Islam reflects not only a lack of knowledge and understanding of this important world religion, but also a lack of sensitivity towards the hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world. The perpetuation of such stereotyping of Islam, especially in the West, not only does not contribute to creating greater understanding between peoples and cultures, but impedes the process of dialogue among civilizations that has been initiated.

In the Malaysian context, while we are a young nation, having achieved our independence only 43 years ago, we can proudly claim to have benefited from the rich cultural heritage of world civilizations. We are a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious society. In spite of this diversity, we in Malaysia have been able to enjoy peace and harmony, thanks to the practice of inter-communal dialogue and understanding among our people. Malaysia's unity in diversity is the result of the tolerance demonstrated by, and the attitude of openness on the part of, our people towards the practice of different religions in the country. The peace and harmony that prevail among the multi-ethnic people of Malaysia have allowed us to reap the full benefits of independence, as reflected by the political, social and economic progress in our country.

The call for a dialogue among civilizations stems from the collective wisdom of humankind and its desire to avoid conflict and violence, in their broadest sense, through a better articulation and appreciation of the different ideas, visions and aspirations of the global community. My delegation therefore fully supports all efforts that strengthen the process of inter-civilizational dialogue, including in particular the adoption of the draft resolution presented today.

The draft before us calls for a universal vision to build an equitable international order founded on inclusion, participation, mutual understanding and tolerance among peoples and nations through practice, education and cooperative engagement. It also invites the international community to utilize dialogue for confidence-building in various fields and to replace exclusion, the resort to force and domination of all kinds with an equitable international order of inclusion, tolerance and mutual human security and development.

This global agenda is not restrictive, and can be achieved through the political, cultural, educational, social, economic, information and even technological domains. We can even develop an appropriate mechanism at all local, international and regional levels to pursue and encourage dialogue in all fields and expand mutual recognition and understanding among civilizations. This body can also form a special committee to encourage, coordinate and facilitate dialogue among civilizations and formulate appropriate ways and means to promote the culture of dialogue and inclusion of activities of the United Nations system.

My delegation welcomes the principles of the Tehran Declaration, adopted in December 1997, and the resolution, adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, in November 1998, on dialogue among civilizations, which designated 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. My delegation also hopes that this dialogue can and will facilitate and provide a suitable framework for constructive and enriching interactions among peoples of various origins and persuasions, on the premise that the diversity of humankind is, and has always been, a source of strength and not a cause of division. We are gratified that the international community has indicated its willingness to embrace the idea as a fresh and rational approach towards attaining a better tomorrow for all of humanity.

We believe that the promotion of dialogue, on the basis of tolerance and respect for diversity, will result in a reduction of tensions and conflict among peoples and nations and contribute positively to international peace and security.

In this regard, we believe the United Nations can and should play an important role to support the process. Indeed, the United Nations itself is the living proof and embodiment of the importance of dialogue among civilizations, as the Member States come from not only different regions of the world, but also diverse civilizational backgrounds. While the aim of the United Nations is to forge unity among nations, this unity should be arrived at through the harmonious blending and assimilation of ideas, values and norms of all human societies, rather than the imposition or domination of any single group of nations or societies. This is reflected in both the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, which should continue to provide our guiding principles as we seek to attain our common goal of peace, security and harmony among nations.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): History has shown that dominance, rather than dialogue, has characterized relations between civilizations. Civilizations have been prone to rise at the expense of other civilizations. If this is a dictate of history, it is one that we must resist. And here in the United Nations, where civilizations past and present have a voice, is perhaps the best place to begin. For the challenges we face today demand that we exert every effort and exhaust every avenue in dealing with them.

In this regard, we must thank and congratulate the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative and untiring efforts to establish the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We are very encouraged by the work that has already been done. The Government of Iran, the United Nations, individual nations and civil society have organized activities that encourage and promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations. This is excellent groundwork and we will continue to support these activities.

Dialogue is the main tool of our Organization. Dialogue and discussions are things that we are very familiar with. We have been accused of using them too much, but we have made progress and achieved much over the years through dialogue and diplomacy.

But there have also been many missed opportunities. There is also much left to do. Misunderstanding and mistrust are still pervasive. We are still far from realizing universal and lasting peace. Conflicts continue in many parts of the world and in forms that defy description.

Our leaders last September committed themselves to addressing the many problems that face us: poverty, disease, environmental degradation, hatred and violence. It is our desire to have globalization benefit all and not a few, to provide a better life to the more

than 1 billion people living in abject poverty. We must make available safe drinking water, basic health care and education, food and shelter, as well as bring peace to all members of humankind, whatever their civilizations may be.

In the final analysis, no one civilization can deal with these difficulties. All our civilizations will have to face these challenges.

Today the lines of communication for dialogue between peoples, between nations and between civilizations are many, and the dialogue moves along these lines at the speed of thought. We would prefer that the words and images that move so fast and so far be those that promote trust and understanding.

But there are times when it seems that when we engage in dialogue we speak past each other and not to each other. It appears that when we speak we are more intent on letting others know what is on our minds than on being open to what others are trying to convey. It also appears that when we engage in dialogue we bring with us our biases and prejudice, which close our ears and erect barriers to what others are saying. Sadly, we stress the differences that divide us rather than those that bind us. Surely, these are not the elements that will lead us to understanding one another and to peace.

A golden opportunity lies ahead as we undertake further activities that will promote dialogue among our civilizations. This is an opportunity that we hope will pave the way to greater understanding. But first, before we engage in dialogue, let us cast away the biases we have about each other's civilizations. Let us speak with each other, unburdened by misconceptions. Differences in the greatness of civilizations need not be emphasized. Let us stress instead what is common to us all. And that is our humanity and the concerns that are shared by all.

There is a common and fine thread that runs through the fabric of all civilizations. That fine thread is our humanity. Let us allow this dialogue among our civilizations to strengthen this thread of humanity. Let this dialogue be among partners and friends, and among equals united in the goal of addressing the most difficult problems that beset our world, our civilizations and of all humankind.

In this way, we will be closer to our hope and expectation that this dialogue among our civilizations will lead us to greater understanding and lasting peace.

Mr. Al-Absi (United Arab Emirates) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report, which contains very important information that can help us in our deliberations on this agenda item, which is of particular importance at the dawn of the third millennium, at a time when humanity is again facing outbreaks of conflict, hostility and occupation. We are witnessing hegemony, an arms race, the illegitimate use of force, human rights violations and discrimination. This state of affairs is characterized by an increase in racism, nationalism, inequality and a lack of understanding among civilizations and peoples, although these civilizations themselves, without exception, are the cultural heritage of humanity.

We attach particular importance to the wishes expressed by heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration for a strengthening of international peace and security, the rule of law, understanding, tolerance and pluralism. However, we feel that in order to achieve these goals we need to set up adequate regional and international mechanisms and programmes that will enable us to bring about positive interaction and reinforce solidarity and complementarity among societies. This should encourage cultures and civilizations to work towards dialogue, tolerance and understanding, particularly since globalization and the revolution in information technology and communications offer us a unique and increasing opportunity to reach these goals for the benefit of the economy and the environment. We can also benefit from this interaction to further promote globalization.

We are convinced that dialogue among civilizations must be multidimensional. It must be a dialogue among religions and beliefs; it must also be a dialogue among countries of North and South, East and West. It must facilitate cultural and political exchanges and the sharing of the positive aspects of each and every civilization. For these reasons, a dialogue leading to mutual enrichment can only be based on equality, objectivity and transparency, the principles of human rights and the precepts of international law, with no attempts at domination, discrimination and double standards very often exercised by large Powers against developing countries and peoples.

We also stress that dialogue among civilizations must face up to the manifest disinformation propagated by some with regard to Islam and its traditions and to genuine Arab traditions.

Dealing with the subject of dialogue among civilizations leads us to a careful examination of history and the cultural and scientific components of all civilizations. The Arab world, to which the United Arab Emirates belongs, was born of ancient civilizations and is the cradle of the revealed religions, of which Islam was born and from which its philosophy extended — not only to the peoples of the Arab world, the Levant and the Maghreb, but also to other parts of the world. The traditions and customs of the Arab peoples, based on the Holy Koran and on the precepts of Islamic culture, which call for tolerance, equality, solidarity and respect for cultural diversity among peoples, have led the United Arab Emirates to adopt legislation, and to implement cultural and education programmes, with a view to consolidating noble moral and human values in its citizens and urging them to respect the cultures and traditions of other peoples. We have also allowed foreign minorities in our country to exercise their religious, cultural and social customs and beliefs. Throughout the year we organize cultural festivals, promote folk activities and invite personalities and intellectuals to participate in these international forums; this helps us to open up our society to the concept of cultural diversity, while observing our own cultural specificities.

With regard to the external world, the United Arab Emirates has signed a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding and arranged cultural and informational exchanges in the area of education at the bilateral, regional and international level. The Emirates has participated in conferences, book fairs and artistic and cultural events throughout the world. This has facilitated our cooperation and interaction with other peoples and civilizations.

In conclusion, we support the proclamation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We hope that this will enable us to make dialogue a new approach and instrument in international relations, thus contributing to bringing together peoples and countries of the world, strengthening solidarity and openness. We hope that this will also help to address the most urgent regional and international problems, such as peace and security, disarmament, poverty, unemployment, pandemics and other problems, including damage to the environment or violations of human rights.

Mr. Nasser (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of my country, I wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his report before the General Assembly.

The item entitled "Dialogue among civilizations" reflects not only the significance of the dialogue among civilizations, but also the resolve of the international community to enter the third millennium on the basis of an approach adopted during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, at which the Assembly declared the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and reconfirmed the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter in fostering and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. It further recognized the cultural and civilizational accomplishments of the human race that embody diversity, transparency and creativity, and reconfirmed the fact that the achievements of civilizations constitute the common heritage of humanity.

My country has followed the meetings held on this issue over the past two years and the resolution adopted at the twenty-seventh session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Kuala Lumpur from 27 to 30 June 2000, which noted with satisfaction the importance of the Universal Declaration on Dialogue Among Civilizations issued in this respect. The concerted efforts of all peoples, Governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society to implement this programme and to support the spirit of diversity, dialogue and interaction are the only alternative to the culture of confrontation, conflict and exclusivity.

The United Nations, a forum comprising all cultures and approaches, has an essential role in bringing differing points of view together and in promoting understanding and cooperation. The General Assembly's adoption of the Declaration on a Culture of Peace demonstrated our commitment to the Organization's work to ensure a future in which a culture of peace and the values of freedom, justice, democracy, development, respect for human rights, equity, equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the prohibition of aggression and occupation, and respect for the sovereignty and the uniqueness of each society are effective building-blocks of dialogue aimed at coexistence and mutual understanding.

My delegation supports the proclamation made by the General Assembly at its forty-third session of the

year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We also welcome the Secretary-General's decision to appoint a Personal Representative in this respect.

In conclusion, dialogue among civilizations is possible and desirable today, at the dawn of a new millennium, more than ever before to build an edifice of understanding among nations and peoples.

Mr. Kouliev (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation endorses and fully supports the statement made earlier by the Permanent Representative of Ukraine on behalf of the Georgia Uzbekistan Ukraine Azerbaijan Moldova Group. I also wish to convey my country's position on certain aspects of the question under discussion.

Next year, the first of the new millennium, has been proclaimed the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This is very symbolic, but its symbolism is not accidental. Entering a new era, the international community should seek dialogue in all areas in order to end conflict and confrontation.

Many predictions have been made regarding the nature of the new era, among them George Soros's "open society" era, Brian Eno's "big market years", William Matthews's "information era" and many others, all the way to Francis Fukuyama's "end of history". However, lengthy discussions were engendered by Huntington's prediction of a "clash of civilizations". There is an advantage to such predictions, since the potential danger of a clash of civilizations helped to launch the dialogue among civilizations.

In his statement of June 1999 to the Centre for Islamic Studies of Oxford University, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for the adoption of a new world ethic to encompass the entire world's cultural diversity and to remove lines of division.

At this session, the initiative has also emerged in support of a new humanitarian order. All this demonstrates the growing desire of the world community for mutual understanding and an end to confrontation. We need to work on the concept of a new world order, no matter what we call it, and the main thing is to identify practical measures for its implementation.

The current era is characterized by globalization. In the context of the dialogue among civilizations, I wish to dwell on the globalization of culture, which might ultimately be called a "new civilization". We are seeing an ever greater number of people, especially the young, turning to a generalized culture. This does not mean merely pop music, Coca Cola and Hollywood movies — it encompasses an entire system of values and its concomitant mentality and behaviour.

In this regard, one cannot fail to be concerned by the fact that certain manufacturers of these pop-cultural commodities are seeking to impose on consumers their own stereotypical understanding of many cultures and religions. Thus, we are seeing with growing frequency the fabrication for narrow political motives of a negative image of Muslims as potential terrorists and fanatics.

Terror knows no nationality and covers all continents. The terrorist acts that have taken place in recent decades in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and elsewhere have been carried out under various political and religious banners. Azerbaijan has also suffered from terrorism. This attitude towards Islam is therefore groundless. Moreover, overheated religious enmity can become the pretext for a clash of civilizations.

History demonstrates that the ancient and enlightened Muslim civilization has made a huge contribution to the development of humanity in the spiritual, philosophical, scientific and other spheres. Medieval Islamic civilization preserved the values of the ancient Greco-Roman culture at a time when Europe was mired in fighting and religious fanaticism. It not only served as a bridge between the Greco-Roman culture and the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, but introduced many new ideas. Currently, Islam is a religion that unites hundreds of millions of people and calls for tolerance. In its basic teachings, Islam calls for respect for the holy figures of Judaism and Christianity.

With a multitude of cultures and where for centuries followers of various religions have peacefully coexisted, from the Zoroastrians up through the most recent religions and sects, and where various cultures have interacted, such as the Turks, Arabs, Russians, Persians and others — my country became convinced through its experience that dialogue among civilizations is possible, useful and necessary, since it reciprocally enriches cultures and nations.

In Azerbaijan many religions have lived and continue to live peacefully — in particular the Muslim,

Christian and Jewish religions. Moreover, the followers of many sects, for example Russian Orthodox Old Believers, found shelter in Azerbaijan when they were being persecuted in their own countries. Unfortunately, in the past decade my country has been drawn into an inter-State conflict due to the strivings of a neighbouring State to expand its territory at our expense and the proponents of this war are frequently trying to represent it as a struggle between Christians and Muslims. My country firmly rejects and condemns the exploitation of religion for political purposes.

The best proof of this is the fact that in Azerbaijan followers of different religions, cultures and ethnic groups continue to live peacefully and to enjoy freedoms — groups such as Azerbaijanis, Russians, Georgians, Jews, Tartars and others. Moreover, regardless of the ongoing conflict, tens of thousands of Armenian nationals are living in Baku. In general, cultural and religious tolerance is a feature that is characteristic of the Turkic peoples from ancient times. In this connection, I wish to refer to some historical facts. The appearance of the Turks under Seljuk leadership, in the Caucasus and the Middle East in the eleventh century, promoted the development of the region, as seen from medieval historical sources. I would like particularly to quote the words of the medieval Armenian chronicler, Kirakos Gandzaketsi, who wrote about the leadership of one of the first Turkish Seljuk leaders, Melik Shah, who freed the Armenian priesthood from having to pay taxes. The quote is that "He tamed the universe, not by violence, but through love and peace." Another example is when, in the fifteenth century, the Jews were being persecuted in Europe and found shelter in the Turkic State.

Examples of the interaction of followers of different religions and cultures are many, and this relates to all regions and continents. It is these kinds of examples that should inspire us towards peace and cooperation, and not "historical speculations" about conflicts that have taken place. In this connection, European history in the second half of the twentieth century gives a good example of how outstanding results can be achieved by rejecting confrontation and the propaganda of hatred and by following the path of democracy and cooperation. The cornerstone in the modern European order is respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the strengthening of democracy.

We feel that this is the foundation on which dialogue needs to be constructed among civilizations. At the same time, I have to state that no country in the world can claim authorship to the principles of democracy and enforce the spread of its own lifestyle. The values of democracy are universal and are the achievement of human civilization as a whole. However, today we still hear a certain amount of preaching in international relations. Dialogue means equality and has to be conducted with respect for cultural diversity and without "dual standards".

Having passed through destructive wars, mankind has come to the need for mutual understanding and compromise. Our Organization provides a fine opportunity to strengthen cooperation in new dimensions, such as a dialogue among civilizations. I am sure that other international and regional organizations will also be able to make their own contribution to this cause. In this connection, I wish to emphasize the role of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which is preparing a document relating to global common values and a 10-year programme of action, the beginning of which will be set for next year, the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

I also wish to point to the contribution made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. At the threshold of the Millennium Summit, there was an interesting roundtable discussion under the auspices of that Organization. The strengthening of dialogue among civilizations can be achieved not only through the development of intergovernmental dialogue in various forms, but also through the practical measures taken by States. To achieve this, we do not need to invent anything new. It is necessary to have genuine commitment on the part of States to the already-existing international legal documents and also to the normative documents adopted within the context of the United Nations system in the area of human rights, tolerance and cultural cooperation.

In conclusion, I wish to mention the contribution of my country to the development of dialogue among civilizations. During the course of the recently held fifth General Assembly of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in Baku in October where, among many others, the question of dialogue among civilizations was discussed. A meeting was organized consisting of representatives of civil society from Azerbaijan and Armenia. I am sure that such meetings are the practical

fulfilment of the idea of dialogue among civilizations and cultures.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation would like to recognize and express appreciation for the continued and tireless efforts made over the past two years by the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the guidance of His Excellency President Khatami, in bringing this issue of a dialogue among civilizations to the United Nations agenda.

Let me also thank the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his informative introductory statement delivered earlier this morning. My delegation also welcomes the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/55/492/Rev.1, which indicates that the call for dialogue among civilizations has been well received across the world and that it has led to the launch of a number of initiatives aimed at celebrating and at diffusing the fear of diversity and underscoring the importance of inclusion.

A dialogue among civilizations is truly a most fitting and timely subject for our collective consideration, not only because we are now at the beginning of a new era in history, but also due to the tremendous changes occurring throughout the world. Indeed, Indonesia looks forward to the implementation of the many promotional activities that will be held in celebration of this event. Today, more than at any other time in history, the diverse cultures of mankind are coming together. Faster forms of communication via the Internet and increased population mobility within and among all countries is bringing increasing contact between all corners of the world.

It is fitting that the year 2001 has been proclaimed the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This clearly indicates the direction we should take and the commitment of the international community to secure a world of tolerance, thoughtful deliberation and equality. Through the adoption of the draft resolution on the Year of Dialogue, we seek greater global integration and stability through better understanding between nations and peoples, in order to achieve a higher level of trust and a better awareness of our mutual goals and objectives. The convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held during the same year further supports the notion that we in the international community are determined to craft a global environment of peace, security and equality in which diversity is viewed as a strength.

Never before in the history of mankind have we, as diverse cultures and peoples, been brought into such immediate contact with anything so rapid and pervasive. Technology, advances in communication and the rapid entry of globalization as the new paradigm of international relations all offer significant benefits and advantages that we either adapt to or ignore at great peril.

Often when we discuss the virtues and vices of globalization, it is within the context of the global economy and business relationships — the free flow of goods and services from one corner of the globe to another. But globalization also brings greater interrelationships between people and increased interaction among cultures. History will tell us that this exchange of ideas and exposure to new concepts and traditions is a positive force that has greatly benefited humanity. Therefore, we should take this new force of globalization and give it a human face through dialogue among civilizations.

The international Year holds considerable implications for the dialogue that exists between North and South, rich and poor. I would recall that the Eighth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1997 emphasized the imperative of positive interaction, dialogue and understanding among cultures and religions, and that it rejected the theories of clash and conflict. Indonesia fully subscribes to this viewpoint and believes that both developed and developing countries can only benefit from an increased knowledge and awareness of other cultures and traditions; for it is these very elements that shape the goals we seek in development and provide the context for our individual visions of the future.

Indonesia would recall the statement by the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, during the round table on dialogue among civilizations, convened by Iran and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 5 September 2000, that the dialogue is so relevant because of the self-evident need for all to learn how to manage diversity better. At no time in history has this been more important than it is today, as we all seek to adapt to, and cope with, the new paradigm of globalization and enhanced forms of mass

communication. Certainly, globalization risks creating an imbalance within certain societies and regions as new ideas and methods can be injected at such a rapid pace that they do not allow for the opportunity of acceptance. Therefore, in the absence of a dialogue among civilizations, we can foresee increased misunderstanding on many different levels and in a wide range of activities. Likewise, we consider it equally important for us to understand our internal as well as external situations.

The importance that Indonesia attaches to the dialogue is evident in the participation of President Abdurrahman Wahid in the round-table discussions. At that event, President Wahid indicated that without this dialogue among civilizations there is no compulsion for us to have an intensified internal dialogue. In fact, if there is to be a successful dialogue among nations, there must also be a dialogue within nations. For Indonesia, with its many diverse ethnic and religious groups, this is particularly true.

Following more than 30 years of a rigid political system, we are now beginning to see the growth and full expression of democracy in Indonesia. This expression has, however, shed light on the contradictions that exist between modernization and the traditionalism of those who cling to a singular view of the world. Internally, we in Indonesia must have such a dialogue and begin to understand how we can reconcile traditionalism and modernity. We believe that the internal dialogue will support our determination to hold a successful dialogue among civilizations while, at the same time, we see the dialogue among civilizations as important in providing the context for deliberations at the national level.

I should like to conclude by underscoring the forward-looking nature of the dialogue among civilizations and our support of the outcome of the Millennium Summit. In that effort, we would encourage all Members and elements of society to join in a dialogue both among and within civilizations. We therefore lend our support to the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.30 and its call on Governments to encourage such participation in the dialogue. We also welcome the decision to be made through the draft resolution to devote two days of plenary meetings at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly to considering this item, including follow-up measures. We are confident that the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations will be successful, and Indonesia will continue to contribute to its success at the highest level.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) *(spoke in Arabic)*: May I at the outset express my sincere thanks to the delegation of Iran for taking the initiative to include the item "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations" in the agenda of the General Assembly.

At the threshold of the third millennium, the significance of a dialogue among civilizations and cultures increases as an indispensable way to achieve peace, stability and development throughout the world.

Undoubtedly, today's human advances are a product of the different civilizations that have arisen throughout history and represent an indivisible chain of evolution, with each link playing an effective role in bringing humanity to a higher level of progress.

My country is proud to be the cradle of such ancient civilizations as the Samarian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilizations. Creativity flowed, reaching a peak when Baghdad was the capital of the Islamic Arab civilization, whose contributions in the fields of science, art and literature formed an innovative channel, linking ancient civilizations to the modern age and leading humanity to its present achievements. Thus, the Arab Islamic civilization embodied the concepts of dialogue among civilizations, tolerance and balance in spiritual, physical and human needs. The Arab nation is qualified to continue its historic mission by effectively contributing to the making of modern civilization.

Throughout this century, humanity has witnessed destructive conflicts, resulting often from a prevailing tendency towards evil, aggression, racism, colonialism, delusions of national supremacy, the arms race, economic privileges, the illegal use of force and the imposition of inhumane sanctions. The international community is duty bound to curb this destructive tendency, and the dialogue among civilizations is the best way to achieve that.

Certain basic principles are important for the dialogue among civilizations to be positive and effective and to attain its desired goals, foremost of which is respect for cultural diversity, based on human dignity and equality among individuals. Recognition of such diversity is a feature of human society and should be accompanied by tolerance, mutual respect for viewpoints and the values that characterize diverse

cultures and civilizations; respect for moral and religious values; recognition of the diversity of sources of knowledge and the need to benefit from all sources of power, wealth and wisdom for all civilizations; the rejection of any discrimination by other cultures and of any form of acceptance of the notion of cultural supremacy; respect for peoples' will in choosing their political, economic, social and cultural systems; and the rejection of any imposed systems of government on others.

Also rejected is the imposition of hegemony, supremacy and interference in the internal affairs of States. Occupation and aggression must be rejected. We must accept cooperation as a means to strengthen common values and an international order in which no single State is in exclusive control of the world order, serving its own interests while disregarding the interests of other peoples and States.

There must be a just and equitable international economic order that conforms to the rules of international law and the principles of the Charter and that is not governed by the use of reckless brutal force or the threat of its use. All peoples and nations must participate, without distinction, in decision-making and the equitable distribution of benefits.

These are the basic principles that my delegation deems necessary for effective and positive dialogue. In addition to the role being played by non-governmental organizations in promoting the culture of dialogue among various societies, it is also incumbent upon Governments to encourage dialogue through educational, cultural and social programmes.

We also maintain that the United Nations, as a representative body of all peoples of the world, can play a pioneering role through the General Assembly or the United Nations agencies and bodies, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in encouraging dialogue and in contributing to the development of universal ideas and principles in the light of the principles I have mentioned.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform members that on Wednesday, 15 November, the General Committee of the General Assembly will hold a meeting at 9.30 a.m. in Conference Room 1 to take up a request by Equatorial Guinea, contained in document A/55/237, for the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of an additional item entitled "Observer status for the Economic Community of Central African States in the General Assembly".

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.60

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

60th plenary meeting
Monday, 13 November 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 32 (*continued*)

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General
(A/55/492/Rev.1)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.30)

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to come before the General Assembly to participate on behalf of my country in the discussion of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, in which much work has been done to bring together the different points of view of different cultures and peoples. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, as I also extend my thanks to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Mr. Picco, for his special endeavours to make the Year a success.

This issue was first presented by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. Among other things, the Assembly at that session called for efforts to enhance closeness among countries and respect for human rights. Since then, the issue has enjoyed the respect and appreciation of all Member States, as it calls for a dialogue among all civilizations. Such a dialogue will no doubt bring good to the peoples of the world by establishing appropriate foundations for international peace and security. As long as channels and bridges of communication exist between different cultures and religions, better understanding of the concerns and problems of others will prevail. Once they come into contact, civilizations can understand and appreciate the extent to which they can deal with specific issues of concern to other civilizations.

The Millennium Summit made it possible for the leaders of the world to meet and issue a statement expressing the aspirations of the peoples of the world to work on enhancing the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. That meeting was a victory for the principle of dialogue between different visions and ways of thinking. In fact, it was an excellent opportunity to exchange views and hold bilateral meetings between the leaders of the world, and as such it can be considered to have contributed to bringing about better dialogue among civilizations.

The General Assembly did not deem that meeting to be enough and so another meeting was held on the sidelines in the form of a roundtable. That roundtable focused on the issue of dialogue among civilizations and included a number of world leaders, in addition to a group of elite pioneers in human accomplishment. Because of the importance my country attaches to the dialogue among civilizations, and because of the ultimate good it brings to all nations, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar, could not pass up the opportunity to participate effectively with his peers in this very important meeting. At the roundtable meeting he made

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a statement in which he explained the importance of the dialogue. I would like to quote from the beginning of the statement made by His Highness:

> "The choice of the dialogue among civilizations as an issue for this roundtable at the sidelines of the activities of the United Nations Millennium Summit is an excellent choice due to the great importance this issue represents in the post-cold-war world".

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

From that statement it is clear that this is a genuine call to build a new world after the end of the cold war, which drove a wedge between the countries of the world and divided it into sections. That division led to an arms race and to the polarization of most countries to one of two blocs. That was quite clearly the case in Europe, which was divided into eastern and western parts. With the end of the cold war we have an opportunity to bring together the various points of view of the different parties. The results have been reflected in the global reality the world was looking forward to: to mobilize efforts to bring about real development.

I would also like to focus on the conclusion of the statement made by His Highness at the roundtable:

> "The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for example, could manage a dialogue among different parties in order to enhance the various humanitarian relations among cultures on three levels. The first level would include scientific activities and courses in history, politics and sociology to take up what is said to be the conflict between civilizations; the second would include bringing about a better reflection of different cultures in the mass media, an activity that could be extended to educational institutions and school curriculums — particularly those aimed at children during the beginning of their education; the third level would include calling upon politicians and statesmen of different cultural groups to bring their points of view closer together so as to minimize the risks of confrontation between them."

Qatar has shown its willingness and readiness to participate in all those activities, in particular when they include recommendations that could be implemented in the real world.

I would like to emphasize what His Highness said, namely, that the State of Qatar would like to host the second meeting of the group of eminent persons, whose first meeting will take place in Brazil. The State of Qatar will provide the group with every facility to ensure the success of their meeting.

Mr. Mousboutas (Cyprus): We would like to express our appreciation by commending the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for making possible the initial inscription on the agenda of the General Assembly of this important item entitled "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations". We regard the inscription of that item on the agenda as timely, and the idea visionary. Considering the fact that recently many conflicts use diversity as an excuse for conflict, the opportunity exists at this historic period for mankind to renew its resolve to promote dialogue in pursuit of coexistence, unity and peace.

We are well advanced into a new century and a new millennium. We should visualize a world that is even more inter-dependent and technologically advanced that the present one; a world in which every aspect of human interchange — political, economic and social — is globalized.

Societies and cultures are not and cannot be isolated entities. A local crisis in a place far removed from our borders or shores unfailingly and immediately affects us all. We are part, it seems, of the same global village, where our actions or omissions, our deeds or misdeeds affect everyday life everywhere. Distances are disappearing, and close interaction, at lightning speed, is ever present and ever growing. In such a world, promoting cooperation, tolerance and understanding among and within countries, cultures and religions is not only a good policy; it is a choice for survival, especially in the light of ominous predictions by some of "clashes of civilizations".

The world has experienced much destruction and human misery in the last 100 years. The twentieth century was marked more by confrontation than by cooperation. It has been correctly observed that today the majority of conflicts where United Nations peacekeeping operations take place have ethnic, tribal or religious bases. Militant separatism forms one of the root causes of conflict in our turbulent world. As the

wise Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, has said, just as in the 1990s, many who went to war use the threat of diversity as justification for conflict. Perhaps in the future, he has further observed, those who seek peace will use the spirit of dialogue among civilizations as means to move forward. Common sense dictates that the calamities which we have brought upon ourselves in the past and in the present should be avoided and that peace and cooperation should replace confrontation and war.

It is imperative, therefore, that we strengthen the bonds of the common destiny of mankind. The item under consideration aims at that goal. The Charter of the United Nations considers dialogue as the sine qua non for harmonizing human relations and resolving differences in relations among States. The Charter furthermore places dialogue at the highest peak of human endeavour aimed at the effective solution of international problems.

As we have said in previous debates on this important item, we consider the initiative of His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Khatami, the President of Iran, to be wise and timely. We must institutionalize dialogue among peoples of different cultures and civilizations if we are to serve the cause of peace and justice. The many positive and mutually beneficial interactions among civilizations must be underlined and must form the basis of educating the young. Due respect for the cultures, religions and values of others must be imbedded in their minds. We need to explain the benefits of cultural pluralism and of the mutual enrichment of civilizations. It is time also to address concerns about tendencies to portray specific religions and cultures as threats to peace and coexistence.

Our survival ultimately depends on our success in convincing the international community peacefully to settle differences and disputes through dialogue in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, and to promote dialogue as the accepted mode of behaviour.

It is through dialogue that my Government is committed to solving the problem of Cyprus. We strive for a peaceful solution, where the two communities can live in peace and harmony as they have done for centuries in the past, without occupation troops or barbed wire.

It is with those thoughts in mind that we have again joined in sponsoring a draft resolution on this item: draft resolution A/55/L.30, introduced by Iran. It contains the elements necessary for promoting dialogue through organizing and implementing cultural, educational and social programmes by Governments and non-governmental organizations.

We intend to participate fully in the programmes proposed for the year 2001, the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, thus supporting in a practical way the initiative which so wisely and so fortunately has been presented to us.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): The report of the Secretary-General on a dialogue among civilizations, contained in document A/55/492/Rev.1, contains the following quotation: "'Our world has never been more integrated, more vulnerable and more unequal'" (*para. 6*). The complex challenges that today's world offers must be addressed through an inclusive process that takes into account different opinions and ideas and that steers us towards harmony and hope in our journey together.

We see dialogue among civilizations as a response to the need for a framework in that inclusive journey. Its relevance is felt particularly in addressing the tensions and divisions resulting from processes of globalization. Those tensions are essentially linked to perceptions of diversity in a globalized world. As the report observes, the perception of diversity as threat is at the very origin of war and causes so many blindly to overlook the common humanity that unites us all.

As human beings and civilizations are drawn towards each other, their differences can potentially breed conflicts. The objective of globalization must not be to promote uniformity. That would be a sure recipe for disaster: the efforts to subdue diversity would result in conflict. I shall not catalogue the miseries that efforts towards uniformity have brought to millions; they are simply too many.

Therefore, our objective cannot be anything but to promote dialogue across cultures, societies and beliefs to address the root causes of conflict. The rich diversity of the world's civilizations can and should be unitized for global harmony and peace, rather than for clashes and conflict. As history has shown, great civilizations have always flourished by sharing their ideas and experiences with other civilizations.

In our globalized world, modern technology has intensified and promoted inter-cultural exchanges, largely unimpeded and at unprecedented speed. The world seems smaller, and distances matter less and less. The idea of distant civilizations with unique practices, beliefs and values that must be eliminated is unrealistic in today's globalized world. Advances in technology and communications have not only brought us together; our world is indeed a global village with a shared destiny for all. Everyone therefore must promote converging values that are common to all humankind. These values — tolerance, understanding and respect for the other — are not only essential; they are the only choice for survival. Such universal values are the embodiment of the collective wisdom, insights and experiences emanating from all civilizations. They provide the rich soil in which dialogue among civilizations can flourish.

We recognize the value of dialogue across all divides, and in its broadest manifestations. We welcome the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, to be observed in 2001. We believe it will act as a catalyst for the beginning of real dialogues that will result in concrete achievements.

Here Bangladesh would like to take the opportunity to extend special thanks to Mr. Giandomenico Picco, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, for his very creative and articulate initiatives in this regard. The United Nations, which represents our diversity, must institutionalize dialogue for promoting peace and harmony. The objective of dialogue is to inform peoples of different cultures and civilizations of the benefits of cultural pluralism and exchange. It is necessary to promote dialogue as the accepted mode of behaviour for settling disputes and differences.

To develop and sustain a real dialogue, we must expand it beyond the confines of the United Nations and State-to-State interaction. Civil society has to be proactively involved; communities must take it up. Academia and the media are important vehicles for advancing dialogue. Most importantly, the dialogue must take place at the people-to-people level if it is to sustain and pick up momentum for benefiting humanity.

Let me conclude by expressing our deep appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran and pay special tribute to President Mohammad Khatami for his visionary leadership in promoting dialogue among civilizations. All of us are in deep debt to Iran for advancing such a worthy cause for the benefit of humankind.

Bangladesh has the pleasure of sponsoring draft resolution A/55/L.30, and we believe that it will be possible to adopt it by consensus.

Ms. Chan (Singapore): Let me begin by affirming Singapore's full support for the ideals represented by the dialogue among civilizations. For its entire 200-year history, modern Singapore has been one of the crossroads and marketplaces where the world's civilizations have met. We are fervent believers in the need for and value of peaceful interaction among civilizations.

This need is more urgent now than at any time in the past. Once upon a time, civilizations could exist in relative isolation, each in their specific geographical regions. Interaction between them, while quite extensive, was generally limited to trade among specialized elites or to war. The great civilizations of the Americas, for instance, were utterly isolated from those of Asia and Europe for most of their history.

For the last four centuries, however, interaction between civilizations — often, but not always, of a violent nature — has been increasing. This development accelerated throughout the twentieth century, and continues to gain impetus through the process of globalization. The great difference from the past is that knowledge and experience of other civilizations is no longer limited to a small minority. Anyone with access to a television, radio or newspaper has information about other societies and peoples that would have been utterly unimaginable only a few generations ago. The growth of information technology has accelerated this process enormously.

The practical problems of a formal dialogue among civilizations are obvious. How is membership of a particular civilization to be assessed? What are the criteria for defining a civilization? Who could conceivably claim to speak for a whole civilization? Furthermore, within every civilization there are many different streams of opinion and belief, some of them mutually contradictory. How are these different and sometimes opposing views within every civilization to be accommodated? The dialogue among civilizations

must also take account of the need for a dialogue within civilizations.

The solution to the problem must lie in recognizing that the dialogue among civilizations cannot be limited to States, peoples or religions alone. Just as civilizations are not monolithic blocs, but amorphous entities comprising elements of history, geography, ethnicity, religion, custom and politics, so a dialogue among civilizations must take place at many levels. The United Nations, as an organization of States, is best placed to engage in the dialogue among civilizations at the level of States and their official organs. It can also assist and coordinate dialogue at other levels, between States and parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society. The work of the InterAction Council, for instance, a non-governmental organization whose members are prominent political figures from every major region of the world, is an example of the rich possibilities of the dialogue among civilizations. Within the United Nations system itself, Singapore fully supports the work of Mr. Giandomenico Picco, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and will do its utmost to assist him in any way possible.

At the same time, we should recognize that the dialogue among civilizations is already going on at levels other than those of States. Individuals, companies and other organizations of all kinds are already engaging in a de facto dialogue among civilizations. Every company that enters a foreign market to do business, every individual who goes abroad to live and work, is also a participant in this dialogue, whether consciously or not.

Before the existence of modern means of transport and communication, most people spent their lives very close to where they were born. Nine out of ten people in the world still live within 100 miles of their birthplace. But many are leaving their birthplace out of desire or economic necessity to seek work and live in foreign countries. The mass movements of populations in the twentieth century, whether of refugees or economic migrants, caused and are still causing a great intermingling of different societies. The political, economic and social stresses that these great movements have caused are a primary reason why the dialogue among civilizations is so important. As individuals and societies experience other civilizations for themselves, many will also experience confusion, uncertainty and even fear. Deep-rooted beliefs and values may be questioned. Some will survive and be stronger for having been challenged. Others will change in unpredictable ways. Our common task is to ensure that this process takes place not, as in the past, through violence and aggression, but in reason and in peace.

Hatred and mistrust of what is different is an enduring feature of human society. It even had some degree of survival value in the past, when communities were small and survival was precarious. However, fear and distrust of the outside world are no longer useful for any nation or people that wishes to prosper and develop economically. It is widely recognized that integration with the outside world, rather than isolation, is the necessary path to both prosperity and security. Unfortunately, old tribal attitudes continue to manifest themselves, whether in outright slaughter or in the constant low-level ethnic and racial tensions that fester even in the richest and most developed societies. As the philosopher Bertrand Russell noted,

> "Religion, morality, economic self-interest, the mere pursuit of biological survival — all supply to our intelligence unanswerable arguments in favour of worldwide cooperation. But the old instincts that have come down to us from our tribal ancestors rise up in indignation, feeling that life would lose its savour if there were no-one to hate."

It is easy to say that diversity must be respected. It is much harder to actually do. Tolerance is not an easy virtue. It requires us to acknowledge the existence and validity of views and practices with which we disagree, or that we find actively abhorrent. In this era of growing interdependence, however, it is a virtue that we can no longer live without. We are all obliged, for our own sakes, to show, as America's founding fathers said in the Declaration of Independence, "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind", whether we agree with those opinions or not.

The great challenge is not just intolerance of diversity, but the incapacity to imagine that true diversity exists. There is within many cultures and individuals an actual inability to comprehend that genuine differences of opinion can exist that are not caused by either stupidity or malice. While the human race is one race and one species, we should not lie to

ourselves. Our common humanity manifests itself in ways that are infinitely variable, and therefore not necessarily mutually compatible. The dialogue among civilizations must be conducted in the full realization that not all values are universal. Even where they are, different cultures will give them different priority according to their different circumstances. We must recognize that, as the philosopher John Kekes said, a conflict of values is

> "not a crisis produced by our adversary's stupidity, wickedness or perversity, but merely another manifestation of the unavoidable conflicts that will continually occur if values are plural, conditional, incommensurable and incompatible".

The true value of a dialogue among civilizations is to find areas of common ground where they exist and to help us peacefully manage the areas of irreducible incompatibility.

Mr. Knyazhinskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): May I begin by thanking the delegation of Iran for the inclusion of this very topical issue on the agenda of this session. I would like also to thank Giandomenico Picco, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, for the very important contribution he has made with respect to this issue.

The development of a dialogue among civilizations is a prerequisite in the task of promoting strategic stability. As the President of Russia, Mr. Putin, stated at the Millennium Summit.

> "We must move to peace, stability and prosperity by relying on the entire wealth of cultures and traditions. In the twenty-first century, the right to national self-expression and independence must continue with dignity to supplement already-recognized approaches to the solution of basic problems. Democracy in international relations means first and foremost unswerving compliance with the fundamental norms of international law. It is an awareness of the entire diversity of global civilization, a recognition of and respect for that diversity." *(A/55/PV.3, p. 11)*

Indeed, a very important element is the recognition that we live in a multifaceted world.

Today, as the process of globalization is gaining speed, we must persist in the attempt to bring about a rapprochement between civilizations that will lead to interaction and mutual enrichment. If we recognize that such a basis exists and that it is needed to uphold law and order in a rapidly changing world, then we must reject myths and stereotypes. Myths, we believe, arise from the conviction that one civilizational model is superior to all others, leading to an attempt to assert the superiority of such model and to make it a dominant factor in development. Stereotypes arise when we view as beyond the pale of civilization everything that does not fall within our own standard framework of understanding.

We agree with the conclusions of the report (A/55/492) of the Secretary-General on "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations", in which he states that the starting point for serious reflection on dialogue among civilizations is the understanding of diversity. It is through this diversity — through recognizing, respecting and encouraging it — that the community of nations can avert the kind of cataclysms it experienced during the twentieth century.

Pluralism serves to ease tensions, both within a single society and at the points of contact between different societies. Russia believes that we should build a democratic, multipolar system of international relations. Of course, the interests of States are different, so it is important to find a common denominator, which can be a difficult and painstaking task.

But there is no other path we can take. Any attempt to measure everything by the same yardstick is bound to be counterproductive and to overlook the lessons of history. It is important that we should seek together ways of regulating the processes that provide for stability in the world, and one of the ways to do this is to strengthen the potential of the United Nations as a unique and irreplaceable mechanism for international relations.

The development of society cannot take place if we do not agree on shared goals — material, spiritual and moral. Russia's unity is strengthened by our nation's inherent cultural traditions and a shared sense of history. Today, in our country, we are seeing a renewed interest in the nation's history; in our roots, which we all value; and in our cultural identity and moral and spiritual principles, which are embodied in

our democratic structures and evidence in Russia's openness to the outside world.

In Russia, the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations received wide support. Its celebration coincided with national events to usher in the third millennium, a fact that we deem very symbolic. That topic received close attention at the meeting held in July of this year in St. Petersburg — the world congress entitled "Conclusions of the Millennium".

One of the most important events of the year was the meeting on a dialogue among civilizations, held on 5 September at United Nations Headquarters at the level of head of State. There is no doubt that the conclusions of this discussion contributed significantly to a creative understanding and to the development of the concept of dialogue among civilizations.

Unity in diversity: this universal human law reflects the essence of civilization, and any negation of this principle will turn the clock back to the days of barbarity.

Mr. Serksnys (Lithuania): It is my honour to speak on this important agenda item, "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations". My Government fully supports, and is very grateful to, the initiator of this item, the Islamic Republic of Iran. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by France on behalf of the European Union.

Dialogue among civilizations, as well as among individuals, should be based on mutual tolerance and on respect for different views and approaches. Furthermore, it should not be restricted to a dialogue among countries or regions. The roots of tolerance lie in civilization itself. Since the Middle Ages, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, tolerance, freedom of speech, and self-expression have been the predominant trends in the life of Lithuanian society. This is evident from the number of books in different languages — Latin, Belarusian, Polish, Hebrew and so on — that have been published in Vilnius since 1522. These traditions have extended throughout the ages, and today, as before, Lithuania remains open to the world.

We live in a multipolar world. Different nations all have their own history, traditions, cultural heritage and stereotypes — in a word, identity — which are fundamental to that nation. To eliminate the identity of a nation is the same as eliminating that nation itself. The observance and promotion of human rights and of the fundamental freedoms enshrined in universal international instruments help to foster national cultures.

Dialogue among civilizations is an important tool for the creation of global confidence and peace. Different cultures have the right to find their places in the world and contribute to the heritage of mankind.

In 1999 Lithuania, Poland, Honduras and Paraguay, supported by Greece and Bolivia, submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference, at its thirtieth session, a draft resolution concerning the organization of a regional conference in Lithuania on the theme of dialogue among civilizations. After the adoption of the resolution Lithuania proceeded to prepare a joint Lithuania-UNESCO conference, which will take place in April 2001. It is a great privilege and honour for Lithuania to host this international conference on dialogue among civilizations, which Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, has kindly agreed to co-chair.

The upcoming Vilnius conference will bring together leading intellectuals in relevant fields from all around the world. Being the only such regional conference in Europe, with participants coming from other continents as well, the Vilnius conference will be a major event in the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

This September, while meeting with Mr. Koichiro Matsuura in New York, the President of Lithuania, Mr. Valdas Adamkus, proposed — and Mr. Matsuura agreed — to invite to the Vilnius conference the heads of States of countries from the various regions of the world. The President of Poland, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, also has agreed to support the conference and co-chair it.

At its conclusion, the Vilnius conference will wish to adopt a Vilnius declaration as a first basic step towards reflecting on how to pursue an authentic dialogue of civilizations during and beyond the United Nations Year.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for the preparation of the report on this item.

In November 1998 the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/22, by which it proclaimed the year 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. I am pleased to reiterate Mongolia's high appreciation of that decision and its readiness to participate in the programme activities to commemorate the Year and make its own contribution. In this connection, I would like to join the previous speakers in expressing gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for its important initiative, and to the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the United Nations Year for the efforts that have been made to make the Year as productive and successful as possible.

It is gratifying to note that the General Assembly's call for a dialogue among civilizations has been well received across the world. As is indicated in the Secretary-General's report, governmental and academic institutions and non-governmental organizations have already been conducting seminars, debates and research projects on this issue, bringing together a variety of civil society groups. Among these meetings, I wish to single out the importance of the round table held at the level of heads of State, here at the United Nations last September. I am confident that meetings like this will enable us to generate an exchange of very important, interesting and useful ideas. In this regard, my delegation associates itself with others who have paid particular tribute to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its leading role in and contribution to the preparations for the Year.

We live in a world that is both unique and diverse, that is rich in its cultural and civilizational diversity. In this world, active and mutually enriching dialogues and exchanges between civilizations are of great importance, not only in exploring one another's rich legacies, but also in forecasting the future. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, diversity is the concept underlying a focused reflection on dialogue among civilizations. We fully share the view that the perception of diversity as a threat is at the very heart of many wars and conflicts. On the other hand, however, diversity is also the wealth of humankind. Therefore, learning how to address diversity has become a more compelling necessity as our world has grown smaller and our interaction more intense and, indeed, unavoidable.

The importance of our discussion today lies not only in the fact that the subject matter is extremely important, but also because its consideration at this session of the General Assembly reflects a determination of Member States to enter the new millennium with a new common approach based on common understanding. From our deliberations here, from the statements made by representatives of different civilizations, we can feel that dialogue and the exchange of ideas can make a valuable contribution to an improved awareness and better understanding of common values. The international community should therefore work towards promoting a norm of interaction and relations between nations based on dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect, so as to maintain peace and security and encourage development and social progress throughout the world.

We are living in an age of what is known as "accelerating globalization". Globalization of the economy, of culture and of thought and increasing interdependence among nations compel us to form a new vision of international relations that is based on the spirit of peace, tolerance, dialogue and solidarity. As Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, rightly pointed out in his address at the round table on the dialogue among civilizations, "globalization must be humanized, harnessed to the yearnings of men and women, not the other way around". In this regard I fully share his view that "through education, we must learn to recognize what each culture owes to all other cultures. Awareness of each others' strands in our common heritage contributes to [lifting] curtains of ignorance, scorn and hate, and weaves a richer legacy for all of us".

My delegation fully shares the view that every nation, country and region, and every culture, should offer others the best of its own and in return accept from others the best of what they have to share. In the case of Mongolia, it has inherited the rich culture of an ancient nomadic civilization. As members might be well aware, Mongolia is considered to be the *locus classicus* of nomadic civilization today. Over the years, efforts have been made in our country to develop further studies on various aspects of nomadic civilization, its influence and interaction with other civilizations, and on preserving and revitalizing the historical and cultural heritage of the Mongols. Nomadic civilization is known for its ability to adapt to nature and live in harmony with it. Therein lie its

strength and perhaps its contribution to future generations.

Mongolia actively cooperated and participated in numerous activities of UNESCO to promote cultural dialogue among civilizations. Thus Mongolian scholars have made and are continuing to make their contribution through their active participation in UNESCO's programme on the preparation of the history of civilizations of Central Asia, in the project entitled "Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue", among others.

A major event of recent years was the establishment by UNESCO of the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations, in Mongolia. The Institute aims to initiate and implement activities which will, on the one hand, preserve the unique historical and cultural heritage of nomads, and, on the other, contribute to developing appropriate elements of modernization in an effort to improve the way of life of nomadic peoples. For thousands of years nomads have inhabited vast territories of the world. Nomadic societies have devised a form of culture particularly suited to their environment and to the need for mobility, reflecting the demands and necessities of such a way of life. They have made an undeniable contribution to the development of different techniques and ways of using land. Pastoral nomadism, for example, remains the surest safeguard against environmental degradation and desertification in some parts of the world.

The observance in 2001 of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is expected to make a significant contribution to promoting further the concept of dialogue among civilizations, cooperation and interaction between different civilizations of the world. Mongolia will be keenly interested in participating in the programme activities within the framework of the Year in developing further its cooperation with other States.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): The State of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people, represents and embodies a noble civilization, the Jewish civilization, that is almost 4,000 years old and has ancient roots in the Middle East.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, which has propounded this initiative to promote a dialogue among civilizations, has repeatedly stressed the vital importance of the "Great Books" to this dialogue. We agree, and believe that the Jewish Bible, the "Old Testament", serves as a case in point. Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other monotheistic religions all derive their foundations from the same source.

The earliest books of the Jewish Bible were the product of the thousand-year era of the experience of the people of Israel building their national identity in their historic homeland. They cover the period from Abraham the forefather, who first came to the Promised Land, to Jeremiah the prophet, who was led captive into the Babylonian exile.

The later books of the Bible — Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther — were written at the height of the classical age of Persian-Jewish relations and profoundly reflect the historic connection between these two civilizations. The close cooperation that existed between the Jewish leadership and the royal courts of Cyrus and Darius are a matter of biblical record. Cyrus and Darius are, to this day, remembered in the Jewish tradition as symbols of tolerance and pluralism.

The return of the Jewish people from their exile and the re-establishment of their homeland in Judea provided the historic background for the commonality of Christianity and Judaism. The interrelationship of the two religions has been the focus of a recent renewed fervour of theological and historical research. Indeed, in Alexandria, Egypt, the Septuagint, the era's meticulous translation of the Jewish Bible into Greek, compiled by 70 of the most prominent Jewish scholars of the time, provided the conduit for the propagation of the Judeo-Christian foundations into Europe and beyond.

The essential building block of Jewish legal doctrine, the Talmud, was composed in the Jewish academies of Babylon following the second exile of the Jewish people from its homeland. In this context, Judaism took on a vibrant role in the culture of the Middle East. To this very day, Jewish scholars and schoolchildren alike study the Talmud in its original language, Aramaic, and apply the Persian didactic method which was prevalent at that time.

The masters of Jewish philosophy and poetry, Maimonidis, Nachmanidis and Judah HaLevy, were the products of the golden era of Jewish-Muslim dialogue. In that period, Jewish communities abounded and flourished from Spain to Baghdad. The interchange of ideas and philosophies between the civilizations was

part and parcel of the great Islamic scholarly revolution of that time.

Morocco is a case in point. The millennium of Jewish-Muslim coexistence in that country yielded a rich and often fascinating dialogue between the two religions and cultures. In order to make their works more accessible to all, the scholars of Moroccan Jewry composed many of their writings in the Arabic language. The poetry of Jewish women penned in Arabic was commonplace and drew its inspiration and timbre from the contemporary poetic genre, which is still very much a part of modern Moroccan culture. Anyone seeking evidence of the quality of Jewish-Muslim coexistence in Morocco can find more than ample illustrations of the friendship and tolerance that existed between the cultures, indicating the profound depth of the common foundations which the communities established.

Similarly, Jewish mysticism was expounded, and the scholarly discourse of the masters of biblical commentary of medieval Europe abounded, in medieval Europe. These endeavours were steeped in the experience of the Jewish people's interaction with the Christian world.

These are but a few examples which illustrate how the dialogue between the Jewish people and the nations of the globe has been an unceasing phenomenon of humankind for the last 4,000 years. All of these cultures contributed to, and benefited from, the relationships they maintained with each other.

The Jewish people, throughout its ancestral heritage, and in its modern reincarnation, which is the State of Israel, was and remains fully open to the dialogue among civilizations, and is committed to it, in the firm conviction that it, too, will be included in the family of nations and cultures without reservation or ambiguity. That is why my country joined the consensus in the last session of the General Assembly on this resolution and still fully supports the concept of a dialogue among civilizations and cultures and commends its promotion.

This concept, by its very nature, is predicated upon its universality. It can have meaning, especially in the context of the United Nations, only when no one country or civilization is ever singled out for exclusion. If international peace and understanding are the true aim of this exercise, the United Nations cannot accept an act of ostracism. Yet that, unfortunately, has been the case.

We must record with regret that the very State sponsoring this otherwise admirable proposal to further develop the theme of "dialogue among civilizations" is itself practising a policy that singles out, of all countries of the world, one Member State, my own, and calls for its liquidation. In his statement in the general debate on 15 September, Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs Kharazzi thus described his vision of the emerging world culture:

> "The answer is participation and not assimilation and imposition ... recognition of the right of nations and peoples to preserve and nourish their culture and cultural identity ... [I]t is essential to recognize and respect cultural rights of individuals and communities." (*A/55/PV.16, p. 29*)

Yet, five days earlier, Foreign Minister Kharrazi made very clear that my country has no place in this world culture, stating to Iranian Television that Israel "is nothing more than a cancerous growth in the region". In this regard, he was merely repeating the phraseology often used by Iran's spiritual leader Khamenei, who, for example, has stated:

> "Iran will never recognize the treacherous Zionist regime, even for an instant, and will continue to fight against this malignant growth."

These statements are two of many such examples of the negation of Israel by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Nevertheless, Israel will again join in the consensus in support of the principle of dialogue among civilizations, insisting on its universal application to all mankind, without discrimination.

Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea): In the past few years, "dialogue among civilizations" has become a household phrase, not just in diplomatic circles, but in journalism and academia as well. Dialogue among civilizations has come to be broadly acclaimed as an essential component of a culture of peace and, indeed, an important basis for a new paradigm of international cooperation.

My delegation is appreciative of the initiatives taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran in this process, in particular its initiative for introducing a draft resolution on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among

Civilizations. My delegation supports the draft resolution.

Each civilization of the world can become a precious asset to humanity by basing itself on a respect for diversity and pluralism that goes beyond its own traditional values to embrace universal values. The task before us is how and in what direction the dialogue among civilizations should be pursued. I believe that one half of the answer lies in the relevance of the United Nations. The United Nations, created as a forum for institutionalized dialogue among nations, is aptly positioned to address this question.

The leaders of the world, who gathered in New York in early September this year, by adopting the Millennium Declaration recognized, inter alia, that, in addition to their separate responsibilities to their individual societies, they have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. The world leaders further agreed to spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.

We have a long list of activities to be performed with regard to the promotion of the concept of dialogue among civilizations. In carrying out such activities, the important thing to be borne in mind is how to enhance universal values to the benefit of humankind, while respecting the diversity of cultures, in a world which is getting smaller and ever more globalized. I am happy to note that a United Nations Trust Fund for the dialogue among civilizations was established last year to finance those activities.

We warmly welcome the designation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. The Republic of Korea will make its due contributions to the process of consultations and preparations so that 2001 can be remembered as the year that the first giant step was taken in the long march towards the promotion of universal values for humankind, including a permanent peace.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call on the observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Hosseini (Organization of the Islamic Conference): It is a privilege for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to address the General Assembly today on its agenda item 32, entitled "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations". In view of the impressive number of speakers who have shed light on the subject at this debate and the scarcity of time, my intervention will be brief.

At the outset, let me remind representatives of the interest of and initiatives taken by the OIC on this subject following the Assembly's adoption of its historic resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998. Our interest and actions in promoting the concept of the dialogue stem from the Charter of the OIC, which aims, among other things, at creating a suitable atmosphere for the promotion of cooperation and understanding among our member States and other countries of the world. We therefore have welcomed the decision of the General Assembly to proclaim 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and its invitation to plan and implement appropriate programmes to promote the concept of dialogue. In the same spirit, we have welcomed the appointment of Mr. Giandomenico Picco as the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We will do all we can to support his work and endeavours in the fulfilment of our common objectives in this direction.

We have read with much interest the Secretary-General's report, contained in document A/55/492/Rev.1, and are pleased to note that the OIC's report on its measures to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations figures in the material being made available for consultation in the United Nations Secretariat. We are also gratified to note that the list of eminent persons who have accepted the Secretary-General's invitation to cooperate with his Personal Representative in pursuing some thoughtful questions in connection with the dialogue includes some well-known personalities from the OIC member States.

We support the Secretary-General's plan to use the facilities of electronic media and television in an innovative way to promote direct and instant communication among peoples of different civilizations in the world today.

I now refer to the draft resolution that is before the Assembly in document number A/55/L.30. I am glad to be able to say that we participated in the drafting process. I take this opportunity to comment on operative paragraph 7, which notes with interest the activities undertaken and proposals made by Member States, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and international and regional organizations for the preparation of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

In this connection, I am glad to report that an OIC intergovernmental group of experts, meeting in Jeddah in February and September of this year, worked on the preparation of the drafts of a global agenda for dialogue among civilizations and on a global programme of action, which are currently being reviewed by an ad hoc committee of the OIC here in New York. Both the Agenda and the Programme will be developed further in broader consultations at the United Nations during the Year of Dialogue. The OIC will, of course, be prepared to foster the objectives of the Year of Dialogue in several other ways in cooperation with the United Nations.

In conclusion, I reiterate the OIC's commitment to the principles and objectives of dialogue among civilizations, and we hope that the draft resolution before the Assembly will enjoy support.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its publication the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.30: Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Canada, the Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guyana, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.30.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.30?

Draft resolution A/55/L.30 was adopted (resolution 55/23).

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Akopian (Armenia): My delegation deeply regrets that the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan used today's agenda item for attacking another nation. He was the only speaker to do so. Such statements are in total contradiction of the very idea of a dialogue among civilizations, and they are capable of killing the dialogue in its cradle.

I would like to refer to some concrete cynical points. The representative of Azerbaijan presented his country as an example of ethnic tolerance, but he forgot to illustrate that statement with the massacres of Armenians in Sumgait in 1988 and in the capital city of Baku in 1990 — the first examples of ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe. He presented his country as an example of religious tolerance, but he did not mention that the only Armenian church in Baku has been destroyed and deserted — even though he claims that there are tens of thousands of Armenians still living in Baku, which is a propagandistic and groundless statement.

By repeating our statement made two weeks ago in this Hall, he insists that his country does not exploit religion for political purposes. I think that the use of mercenaries from certain countries and repeated calls for religious solidarity do not leave any doubt about who is exploiting religion for purely political reasons.

In our recent statement we confirmed once again that the fact that Armenia and Azerbaijan have different cultural and religious heritages should not be regarded as an obstacle, but rather as an opportunity to engage in a positive and constructive dialogue which would eventually create an atmosphere of much-needed mutual confidence and understanding between our countries.

In the not so distant past our countries were engaged in such a dialogue — a dialogue that I would prefer to call an interaction. This interaction contributed greatly to the mutual enrichment of both the Armenian and Azerbaijani cultures. Unfortunately, that dialogue has been interrupted, but the ongoing political dialogue between our countries gives us hope that, in the near future, the spiritual dialogue will follow.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): In connection with the statement made by the representative of Armenia. It is unfortunate that, despite the topic of the item under consideration, the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the Armenian representative, as all present can see, is pursuing other goals. To be perfectly honest, he is continuing the aggressive strategy of his country against mine — the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In December 1987, it was Armenia that forcibly expelled its more than 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijani origin from the city of Kafan. Those people, suddenly deprived of everything during the severe winter of that year found refuge in Azerbaijan. That was the very first provocative and violent action of the well-thought-out policy of Armenia that fuelled the conflict between the two countries. It might be noted that today Armenia is almost a mono-ethnic country.

In April 1992, it was units of the armed forces of Armenia that committed one of the bloodiest crimes in modern history. Having razed the Azerbaijani town of Khajeli, they mercilessly destroyed hundreds of helpless innocent people. As a result of atrocities by criminal military units, more than 600 inhabitants of Khajeli were brutally killed.

As for the Armenian church in Baku, the church is safe, but evidently it is closed.

There is an excellent Russian proverb that precisely describes the actions of the representative of Armenia: "a guilty conscience betrays itself".

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Armenia, who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Akopian (Armenia): First, even if one were to accept that some mythical Azeri population was expelled from Armenia — and that is totally false — the Azerbaijani representative has to admit that no Azeri population has been massacred in Armenia since the beginning of the conflict. Secondly, with regard to the events in Khojali, allow me to remind him that, even if one were to agree that some massacres did take place in Khojali, they took place after the Armenian pogroms in Sumgait, Kirovabad and Baku, which may be described as acts of genocide. All these events took place after the Azerbaijani aggression against Nagorny Karabakh in 1992, which were aimed at the final ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population of Nagorny Karabakh.

As for the Armenian church in Baku, I have with me a journal that any interested delegation can see, and I also have a photograph taken by an independent American journalist that shows the current status of the Armenian church in Baku.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Azerbaijan, who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): I would like to invite all representatives here to visit Baku and to check the status of the Armenian church.

With regard to the so-called colonial domination by the Soviets and the foreign occupation by Azerbaijan of Nagorny Karabakh, I congratulate the representative of Armenia on the invention of a new subterfuge — I would call it "subterfuge 2000" — that followed the previous one – the so-called blockade of Armenia by Azerbaijan. May I remind him that so-called blockaded Armenia borders not only Azerbaijan but also three other countries of the region.

If Armenia had really been blockaded and totally cut off, the outside world — the Security Council — would have acted accordingly. Instead, the Security Council, the highest international body responsible for international peace and security, dealt with the conflict and in 1993 adopted four resolutions — 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) — expressing its serious concern at the deterioration of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and at the tensions between them and at the continuation of, I emphasize, the conflict in and around the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.